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MEMORIES OF FORTY YEARS

PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL.

MEMORIES OF FORTY YEARS

BY
PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL
(CATHERINE KOLB)

With Photogravure Illustrations

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INTRODUCTION

FRANKNESS is not a useful quality; and unfortunately I possess it, which fact has not contributed to make my life more smooth. But I have reached an age when the judgments of the crowd lose importance, and when one does not easily part with one's own opinions. I have had friends, and I have made enemies; and whilst I care for the former, I never trouble about the latter.

My experience of humanity has been varied; but I am thankful to be able to say that it has not embittered me, because I hold that if only one's mind is made up not to expect too much from mankind, and to respect the selfishness which is the essential point in its general character, it is possible to get along most comfortably. It is in this consideration for the selfishness of one's neighbours that one can find the best means of getting on in the world.

One is always considered pleasant when one neither expects nor asks anything of anybody; and yet is willing to give without stint. If once this fact is recognised, one can afford to be amused at the kaleidoscopic spectacle which passes before the eyes of one who finds amusement in observing the hidden springs which move the marionettes of that large theatre called human life.

Personally I have found that spectacle most entertaining, and delight in it to the present moment. It changes so constantly in its details, and yet is so unchangeable in its dramatic character, that one can well afford to forget oneself in watching it.

When thus I wander in the past and try to think where I was happiest, it seems to me difficult to decide. Almost everywhere I have been I have met nice people; and where sometimes this has not been the case, then I have hastened to forget. I knew I could not alter character, therefore why bother my mind with unpleasant memories?

As to those whose descriptions appear in this book, I have painted them exactly as I saw them. I have tried not to be unfair, and I do not think I have been harsh in my judgments, though I may have shown myself severe. Severity is not unkindness, although it is often mistaken for such. Unkindness is cruel; severity is just. I have endeavoured to be just—and I have not found it difficult to be so.

I have begun these wanderings into a past full of agreeable hours with my impressions of England and the English. My motive has been twofold. First, because my book being published in England it should be of particular interest to English-speaking peoples to read a foreigner's impressions. My second reason is that I have the sincere conviction that nowhere as in England exists such a spirit of all-round good fellowship and toleration.

The second part of my book concerns itself with Germany, my home for many years.

The period during which I lived in Berlin was an

education in itself. I saw many curious things, and met many remarkable people.

Circumstances following upon my father's death made me leave the German capital. I would not be speaking the truth if I said that I was sorry for this. I have certainly no reason to regret the years which I spent in Berlin. People were most amiable to me; the Royal Family treated me with a kindness for which I shall remain for ever grateful.

After I left Berlin, I was thrown into a different circle altogether, which certainly was more congenial to me, because I happened to be an actor—not a mere spectator—in the drama of life such as it presented itself there. Then came journeys in foreign countries, acquaintances with other persons, all the vicissitudes of a varied and interesting life, which happily for me has left me unembittered.

I was not sorry, however, when circumstances brought me back to the land of my birth, to the Russia I loved so dearly, and to which so many family ties bound me. My father and grandfather had served Russia faithfully and long. My wanderings led me to St. Petersburg, which, because of recent events, has been rechristened Petrograd.

I was very fond of St. Petersburg and its society, and found myself thoroughly at home. People were undoubtedly far less formal than in Berlin. It was therefore with feelings of unmixed pleasure that I took a house, and settled in the capital of Russia. I had already spent several seasons in Russia and had enjoyed them thoroughly, especially the weeks which I passed in Moscow, at the time of the Coronation

of the late Emperor. These years have remained in my recollection surrounded with a halo of joy and happiness which nothing has been able to efface, and it is therefore with infinite pleasure that I recall them.

I have never been able to understand the famous lines of Dante when he says:

"No greater woe
Can be than to remember happy days."

It seems to me, on the contrary, that it is soothing to the heart and mind to be able to look back on days when one thought that one had everything heart could desire. In truth, this world of ours is not such a bad place after all. Kind people are to be found; generous folk too; and my experience of sovereigns, which has been varied, has proved to me that nowhere, perhaps, can one meet with more generous instincts than amongst them.

I firmly believe that as existence becomes more complicated, as events go on, as the struggle for life gets harder, as jealousies stand out with more acuteness, the better and nobler qualities of human nature also shine more brilliantly than they did when everything seemed simple and easy in life. The world is changed, perhaps for better, perhaps for worse; but it is quite certain that we have all become more serious than we were at the time of my youth, and this notwithstanding the "tango" and yet more recent crazes for excitement.

Unknown heroisms still abound, customs pass and fashions change, but the soul of man remains immortal. After all, life is so short and eternity so long, that it

would be a great mistake to trouble ourselves about what happens here below.

People may call me a philosopher; they will never be able to think me a misanthrope, for indeed the faculty of enjoyment exists in me just as intensely as in the days of my youth. And, standing on the threshold of old age, I am glad to say that I have lived and loved, suffered and been merry; that my past has been sweet, though it has known bitter hours; but there is not a single page in it I would care to tear away.

PART I

Memories of England

Memories of Forty Years

CHAPTER I

MY VISIT TO ENGLAND

IT is always with particular affection that my thoughts linger on that part of my remembrances which touches the numerous journeys I have made to England. After my own native Russia, it is the country I care for most; it is the only one where one can live in the enjoyment of many small things that add to the pleasure of life, which there seem natural, whilst everywhere else one can only obtain them after a strenuous fight.

My eldest daughter was presented at the Court of St. Petersburg in 1893, and we thought it to her advantage to take her to England, thus giving her the opportunity of spending a season in London. Personally, I love England, though English politics have not always been to my liking, and I have always felt admiration for its vigour and the strong intellectual movement that has always characterised the whole course of English history. English science, English literature, English art, have always seemed to me to be imbued with far more personal, individual feeling than anywhere else, perhaps on account of the fact that in no

other country of the world has private independence of opinion been more carefully respected.

English society, too, appeared to me to be built on stronger, healthier lines than in France, or even in my own beloved Russia. Men and women moved about with far more freedom and far less regard for those social hypocrisies and customs which one observes without respecting them. For a girl born and bred in a relatively small and narrow circle a visit to England was an education in itself, and I wanted my daughter to have this, so as to broaden her views, and to afford her a sight of life as it exists in that wide, wide world which London, more than any other place in the universe, represents.

We arrived in England in April, 1893, and spent three delightful months of the season in the vast metropolis that is so unique and so different from anywhere else in Europe. We certainly enjoyed our visit—I perhaps more than my daughter, because she was still too young and inexperienced to appreciate the grandeur of all that she saw and amidst which she moved during our stay in London. But yet she, too, was impressed by that dear, old, merry England and the infinite resources it offers to the thinker and the philosopher, the poet and the artist, the man of science and the man of pleasure, the politician and the writer, to all those who look beyond the present moment and the present day for their instruction and their judgments.

As for myself, I must own that I carried away the pleasantest impressions of those few weeks. London, even if one knows no one in it, is a place where

it is impossible to remain dull. I have spent hours roaming in Westminster Abbey, meditating over the multitude of historical incidents that are associated with it and inseparable from its name. And the treasures of the National Gallery, the British Museum, and other places of less world-wide fame would be in themselves sufficient to satisfy the most ambitious wishes and help the stranger to spend his time profitably and usefully.

But when one has friends amidst that refined, polished society, then indeed one enjoys oneself as nowhere else in the world. For a Russian, coming from a country where life runs on such very different lines from those of England, such a visit is most refreshing to the mind and healthy to the soul. At least, that is what I have always felt when in London.

Politics at that time were respected, which at present they are not. The tide of democracy has, unfortunately, also invaded England. She has lost her greatest politicians of the Victorian days, those who had kept the traditions which Burghley and Walsingham fought for in the time of Elizabeth, and of Pitt and of Fox in later reigns. Gladstone was then alive, and the gigantic figure of Lord Salisbury was commanding the political horizon with its imposing magnitude. Mr. Balfour still represented the hopes of the Conservatives, just as much as Lord Rosebery was considered by the Liberal party to be the one great man of the future. Mr. Lloyd George had not come above the horizon, and scarcely any outsiders had penetrated into the exclusive ranks of society; even American millionaires were not yet considered indis-

pensable to the welfare of London's smart circles. It is true that Baron Hirsch was to be met at some great houses, such as the stately home of the lovely Duchess of Devonshire; but then he was looked upon by many as an unnecessary evil, whereas to-day he would be considered as an unavoidable one.

Some hostesses, like the late Lady Salisbury, held strong opinions as to who could or could not be admitted to their entertainments, and even the necessities of political life did not make them yield, whatever might be the party exigencies. I remember an amusing story that was told me at Hatfield House about Sir Philip Currie, who had persistently implored Lady Salisbury to send a card for one of her "At Homes" to a certain important supporter of the Conservative party in some obscure provincial town. The Marchioness always refused, until at last Sir Philip—who, let it be said *en passant*, always managed to get his own way whenever he had some particular aim in view—ended by declaring that he could vouch that the person in question would simply place the card on his mantelpiece, and never dare to put in an appearance at the Foreign Office. When Lady Salisbury asked him how he could undertake the responsibility of making such a statement, he declared that he could do so because he happened to know that the man for whom he was begging the invitation did not possess any evening clothes. The argument proved successful, because the card was sent; but I cannot say whether the person who received it abstained from making use of it for the reason put forward by Sir Philip Currie.

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Victoria R.

HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA IN 1893.

A Glimpse of Queen Victoria

Looking over some old letters and diaries referring to that London season, I find in one of them a few remarks concerning my impressions of what I saw, and especially about a garden party at Marlborough House, given in honour of the marriage of the Duke of York, now King George V., at which I had the honour of seeing Queen Victoria again. Writing to a friend of mine, after whose death my correspondence with her was returned to me, I find the following description of the Queen, which may prove interesting, considering the fact that it was not destined for publication, but represented exactly the impression produced upon my mind by her personality.

"I did not think that the Queen, at the advanced age she has reached, would have preserved such an imposing appearance. There is in her small, rather bent figure a quiet dignity that would single her out at once as a queen, in spite of the extreme simplicity of her dress, as well as of her demeanour, which is that of an elderly woman. The sound of her voice is the same as ever, and reminds one so much of the dear Empress Frederick. The eyes are frank and sincere, and they look at you with an expression of intense truth; but they are imperious, and reveal a character that does not brook contradiction.

"She arrived rather late, and after having been driven round the grounds in a kind of small pony carriage, she sat down in a tent that had been arranged for her, where she had some tea, reclining in an armchair and keeping in her hand a stick upon which she leaned when walking.

"The Royal Family surrounded her, and it seemed

to me that they stood somewhat in awe of her. The sight of that aged lady in her simple dress who represented so much power, so much might, and who bore the burden with such utter lack of affectation, was certainly very impressive, perhaps more so than if she had appeared in her crown and royal robes.

"A few days later I saw her again driving to St. James's Palace in her gilded coach on the occasion of the wedding of her grandson. Our windows opened on Piccadilly, and we could watch the procession as it moved slowly along amid the cheers of the crowds that lined the streets. The Princess of Wales, with whom was our Grand Duke Tsarevitch and the King and Queen of Denmark, was welcomed with great effusion; but all the enthusiasm of the mob seemed directed towards the bride in her white attire and the Queen, opposite whom sat the Duchess of Teck. One could at once see how very popular is Queen Victoria among her subjects, perhaps because no other sovereign has understood so well how to appeal to their inmost feelings and to associate them with all her joys and sorrows, as so consistently she does.

"I would not say it aloud, for fear of being charged with using exaggerated language; but, in my eyes, Queen Victoria appears in the light of an exceedingly fascinating woman, in spite of her years. There is in her face, even more than in that of her daughter, the Empress Frederick, an extreme charm. It is seen, too, in her eyes and her voice; her whole person, in fact, expresses great sympathy, just as much as it demands it, and to that must be added the prestige

of the traditions which she embodies, the grandeur which she represents."

It was not only Queen Victoria who impressed me during my stay in London. In a certain sense I was struck by the simplicity of the whole Royal Family, so different were they from our own Grand Dukes. The Duchess of Teck especially remains in my mind as a vivid example of affability and kindness combined with simple dignity. Anything more pleasant than her welcome when we called upon her at White Lodge could not be found, and one quite forgot whilst there that one was in the home of Royalty, so entirely free from etiquette it seemed. And one of the happiest of that united family was Princess May, the present Queen of England. Ever since she has shared the throne she has been an example of what a queen should be in every possible way; but she certainly owes much to the wonderful education she received under the superintendence of her accomplished mother, who has placed the whole of England under a debt of deep gratitude for the care she took in bringing up her daughter to fill the place she so worthily occupies.

Talking of White Lodge reminds me of an adventure that befell us one Sunday when we called there. We had been invited by my present son-in-law, Prince Blücher, to dine that evening with him at the Star and Garter, Richmond, and we decided to start a little earlier so as to be able to pay our respects to the Duke and Duchess of Teck during the afternoon. After we had brushed the dust off our clothes I asked the porter of the Star and Garter to call a carriage. Hearing this, Prince Blücher, always on economy

bent, declared that it would be far too expensive, and that he would go himself and get us a fly, for "half the money this man will require," he energetically added. It was impossible to prevent him putting this virtuous intention into execution, and perforce we sat down in the hall and waited for his return. In about fifteen minutes he reappeared with the dirtiest, most disreputable-looking vehicle it has ever been my fortune to see. When I perceived it I began protesting energetically, and declared that we could not possibly enter the gates of White Lodge in such a disgraceful conveyance, to which Prince Blücher declared that we need not do that, and could leave the sorry-looking object outside. Time was pressing, so, gathering our skirts together, we jumped into this filthy carriage, which we were very careful to abandon within reasonable distance of the ducal residence, where we made our appearance in the guise of peaceful pedestrians.

Everything went well at first; but when we took leave of the kindly, amiable Duchess, the Duke said he would have our carriage called on to the lawn in front of the house. We immediately protested with touching unanimity, that we had no carriage, which was not such an untruth after all, and that we intended returning to the Star and Garter on foot, just as we had come. "Oh, in that case," said the Duke, "I shall take you down to the gate at least." In a fit of desperation I begged him to abstain from doing so, saying it was really too good of him, and that for nothing in the world would we give him such trouble; but my protestations were useless, the Duke

proved adamant, and insisted on walking down to the road with us, where the miserable fly that had won the heart of my son-in-law by its cheapness was waiting. When the driver saw us, what did he immediately do but start his horse and come to meet us! At first we pretended we did not see him; but the man was resolute, and, to my intense consternation, began calling us by name. "Why, what does this creature want from you?" asked the Duke of Teck, upon which, overcome by my feelings, I sat down on a stile by the road and burst out laughing; for, finding that truth is always best, and that we had failed in observing the eleventh commandment and had been found out, we related the whole story to His Highness, who joined in our mirth with the good nature which was one of his characteristics.

It was about that time, shortly before the marriage of the Duke of York, that the ship *Victoria* went down in the Mediterranean, together with brave Admiral Tryon and so many others. A State ball was to be given at Buckingham Palace the next day; but it was immediately countermanded by order of the Queen, who thus showed her keen sense of the misfortune that had befallen her Navy. My daughter was disappointed at the loss of this opportunity to be present at a Court ball in England; but, thanks to the kindness of Baron de Staal, the Russian Ambassador, we were invited to another, which was attended by our Grand Duke Tsarevitch, who had arrived in England a few days before for the marriage of his cousin, the present King George, with Princess May of Teck.

I cannot say that I was very much impressed by the inside of Buckingham Palace. It seems that now it is immensely improved, and arranged with much better taste than during the reign of Queen Victoria. In 1893 its decoration had evidently not been altered since Prince Albert had designed it, after his marriage with the Queen. The supper room during the ball was the scene of a terrible crush, so that it was next to impossible to find even a sandwich to eat; but the entertainment itself was regal, by reason of the pomp that accompanied it, as well as by the splendid uniforms, beautiful dresses, wonderful jewels, and lovely women, the equal of which I have never seen in any other city. The procession of the Royal Family as it entered the ballroom was most interesting, and the quaintness of the Palace added to the beauty of the scene.

I remember having a lengthy conversation during that ball with the late Duke of Argyll, then Marquis of Lorne, who had known my father and mother-in-law when he had been in Berlin following his course of education. The Duke was a quiet, rather shy man, highly cultured, exceedingly well read, and versed in everything that was connected with history and literature. The Princess Louise was the most attractive of all the daughters of the Queen, and, though tall and elegant, reminded me more than did her other sisters of the Empress Frederick, whose sweet voice and lovely eyes she possessed. Her conversation was most amusing, and she used to tell anecdotes in a very entertaining manner. For instance, one evening after a dinner at the house of Lady Burghclere, then Lady

Winifred Gardner, the pretty, clever daughter of the late Earl of Carnarvon, the Princess Louise, who was present, related to us how one day, hearing that the old Duchess of Cleveland prided herself upon having once been pretty, she had asked the Queen whether this had been really the case, to which Her Majesty had replied, "Yes, my dear; but it only lasted one moment."

The marriage of the Duke of York was during the summer of 1893, and the one subject of conversation. On the evening of the day on which it took place we were invited by the present Dowager Lady Tweeddale to view the illuminations in the City. We arrived at London Bridge, and we somehow, together with my daughter, M. Kroupensky, the Councillor of the Russian Embassy, now Ambassador in Rome, and a young Russian officer, Count Kreutz, became separated from our other companions and had to walk back to the West End, thus missing a supper at the hospitable house of Baron Alfred Rothschild, where we had been invited. In one sense I did not regret this somewhat fatiguing incident, because it impressed on my mind the great spirit of order that is such a distinctive feature in the character of the English. The streets were thronged with people; so full were the thoroughfares that a pin, if it had fallen, would not have reached the ground; and yet nowhere was order in the least infringed upon, not the slightest sign of disorder was to be noticed. No policeman was even in sight. Such a thing would have been impossible in any other country except England, and it could not fail to deeply impress any foreigner.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH POLITICAL CIRCLES

IN the year of grace 1894 the Liberal party was in power, and Mr. Gladstone Prime Minister. His colleagues in the Ministry were all clever, and did not yet include men outside the upper ten, such as Mr. Lloyd George, or even adventurous scions of noble houses, like Mr. Winston Churchill.

Mr. Asquith, who was Home Secretary, if I am not mistaken, was considered the rising star of his party, and was very much talked about; partly, I believe, on account of his marriage with Miss Margot Tennant, the heroine of E. F. Benson's delightful book, "Dodo." He had not yet succeeded in arousing the enmities that crowd around him at present, and there were still people among the Conservatives who reluctantly admitted that he was a very clever man, in spite of their indignation against all the supporters of Home Rule.

I found him something more than clever; I found him a man with not only a broad intelligence, but one who could look at things with a broader outlook than the average Englishman. Mr. Asquith has studied social questions at home as well as in other countries, has read every book published on the subject, and if he does not govern Great Britain according to the

tastes of his opponents, he tries to do it conscientiously, and at least has brought vast knowledge and erudition to the task he has assumed.

As a companion and neighbour at dinner, Mr. Asquith has always been quite delightful and most entertaining, a superior mind, and a pleasant talker, who knew how to give a particular interest to all questions which he handled, even the driest. He possesses, too, a natural dignity and a quiet courage. These enabled him to reply with indifference to the storms of abuse which were showered upon his head, even at that earlier time when Suffragettes were still unknown. His long experience at the Bar had given him considerable insight into the human mind, and hardened him in a certain sense; but it had not hardened his heart nor destroyed his sympathies for the cause of the public good, which he considered it his duty as a Minister of the Crown to forward to the best of his abilities.

Before relating my impressions of others of Mr. Gladstone's circle I will speak of my first meeting with him. It must be conceded to Mr. Gladstone that he had known how to surround himself with very clever colleagues; his whole Cabinet was composed of serious, and each in his own way, remarkable men. John Morley, now Viscount Morley, was perhaps the one I admired the most among them, and whenever I met him I endeavoured to induce him to sit by me and engage in conversation. It was not always easy, as London during the season is a place where it is impossible to sit down except at dinner, life being a constant rush from one house to another, rest

being only possible in one's carriage or in one's bed when one happens to find time to sleep.

John Morley's mind was far stronger than Gladstone's, and his intelligence certainly superior to the Grand Old Man's, being at the same time more serious and more practical. He did not indulge in Utopian dreams; he was a statesman, a thinker, a writer of great and real merit, and a scholar who found in study a solace for all his cares. He was a staunch Liberal of the old Whig school, but somehow gave me the impression of not being such an admirer of his chief as was generally believed, and this in spite of the book which he consecrated to his memory.

It seems to me even now that his admiration was given rather to the principles of the party, of which Mr. Gladstone was the leader, than exclusively to Gladstone himself. Morley was perhaps the one man among those whom I have met who knew history the most thoroughly, and by the word "history" I do not mean exclusively English history, but that of Europe in general. His judgments, if less impartial than were Ranke's for instance, reminded me of those of the latter, for he never allowed prejudice to interfere with his appreciation of great men's actions or deeds. I remember one night talking with him about Mignet's history of Mary Stuart, and he admitted that it was a very interesting work, adding a remark I have never forgotten, and which was an excellent characteristic of the work of the French historian: "It is a pity that whilst showing himself relatively just in his judgment of the conduct of that Queen, he spoilt the effect of his whole work by not closing it with the account of

her execution. Instead, he added some pages of appreciation and remarks that detract from the strength of his description of her last hours."

The remark was perfectly true, and re-reading the book I found myself often thinking of what he said. But then M. Mignet was a Frenchman, and French authors always add sentimental remarks where they are not needed. The solemnity attending great calamities, which it is always better to relate simply and without comment, is unknown to them, and if I may say so, one sees that the influence which Shakespeare's genius exercised on English, German, and, in a certain sense, Russian literature is absent in French writing.

The Secretary for India, Lord Kimberley, was a diplomat of the ancient school, at the same time a representative of a type of old Whig which is fast dying out, if it has not died out entirely. He was a little pompous, a little stiff, though extremely courteous—a man who looked most seriously on politics, identifying them perhaps too much with those of the party to which he belonged, but incapable of the intrigues to which modern diplomacy, unfortunately, is prone in these degenerate days. He could not be anything else but a gentleman. He was true, loyal, sincere, and any interests confided to his care were well attended to and entirely safe in his hands. He was a charming talker when he gave himself that trouble, and a most pleasant host to his guests; a man one liked to meet, and who would not soon be forgotten.

As for Lady Kimberley, I was extremely fond of her. She was not generally popular, on account of her

very sharp manner, and was terribly dreaded, especially by women. But she was the cleverest, most amusing person to talk to, a delightful companion, full of wit and humour, bright and caustic. She could seize unerringly upon the funny side of every question, and notice the various oddities of other people as well as her own.

I remember that at the Queen's drawing-room I happened to be standing not far from her. After the Diplomatic Corps had made its curtsy to the Princess of Wales, and taken up its position opposite the throne, whilst the general public filed past, she beckoned me to her, and kept making remarks on the various people present, with such wit and irony that I had the greatest difficulty to prevent myself laughing outright, which delighted the old lady, who, I believe, would have given a good deal to see me offend the solemnity of the occasion by an outburst of mirth.

Lady Kimberley was fond of me—why, I have never been able to discover. She was extremely kind, and invited me to her house several times. I must say I quite reciprocated the feeling, and was very sorry when, shortly after I had left London, I heard of her death.

Mr. Gladstone had another great nobleman in his Cabinet, the Marquis of Ripon; a statesman of unblemished character, high honour, stainless reputation, and moral courage, that rare thing nowadays, which he showed at the crisis of his political life, when he boldly renounced the Anglican faith to enter the Roman communion.

I cannot say he was a man of extraordinary intelli-

gence, and I believe it was more to the importance of his position than to his personal capacities that he owed his political successes and career. But the integrity of his conduct, the sincerity of his opinions, which never allowed him to be drawn into any intrigue that would compromise his party, made him an exceedingly valuable supporter, and inspired in others a confidence which perhaps they would not have awarded to the same extent to Mr. Gladstone, who was well advised when he invited Lord Ripon to enter his Cabinet as Secretary of State for India.

At that time Mr. Winston Churchill had just emerged from the schoolroom, and none, except his intimate friends, would have supposed he was going one day to become so important a personage.

I remember meeting him at Ford Manor, the house of Mrs. Beresford Melville, the mother of Mr. Spender Clay. She asked us once to spend a week-end with her. Winston Churchill was scarcely more than a boy, but just as exuberant as he is now. Perhaps less so, though, because he had not yet taken himself quite *au sérieux*, and had yet to drink from the cup of success. He had all the brightness and cleverness and eccentricity which distinguishes the Churchills. Even then he was most amusing and entertaining, and liked to talk about his future career, being already convinced that he was to become Prime Minister of a regenerated England, whose prophet was to be the great Duke of Marlborough, and whose recognised divinity the omnipotence of the Churchills in every possible event connected with its existence and prosperity.

The impudence of that younger scion of this illus-

trious house bordered on the marvellous, and was most amusing to watch. It was an education in itself to listen to him; it opened new horizons as to what modern youth can rise to; and between his disdainful insouciance, his ready wit, his vanity, and the real cleverness which he undoubtedly possessed, he made a delightful creature, whose acquaintance provided one with incessant and constantly renewed enjoyment, whom one was longing to meet again, but devoutly thankful not to possess among the members of one's own family.

I was once talking about him with my old friend, Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, and wondering at the exuberance which characterised the personality of the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, about whom he had often spoken to me, but whom I had never met. He summed Winston up in a manner that I cannot help recalling here. "Winston," he said, "is a curious mixture of American impudence and English caution, and I feel sure that later on his wildest acts in life will be very wisely premeditated." I have often remembered this appreciation from a man who had perhaps more closely studied human nature than most of his contemporaries.

Sir Mountstuart in general was a keen observer, and his characteristic observations of the people whom he knew were always interesting, and very seldom mistaken. I thus remember his writing to me after the death of Sir Robert Morier, who had been for some years English Ambassador in St. Petersburg, the following lines, which perhaps describe that remarkable man better than anything that has ever been said about him:

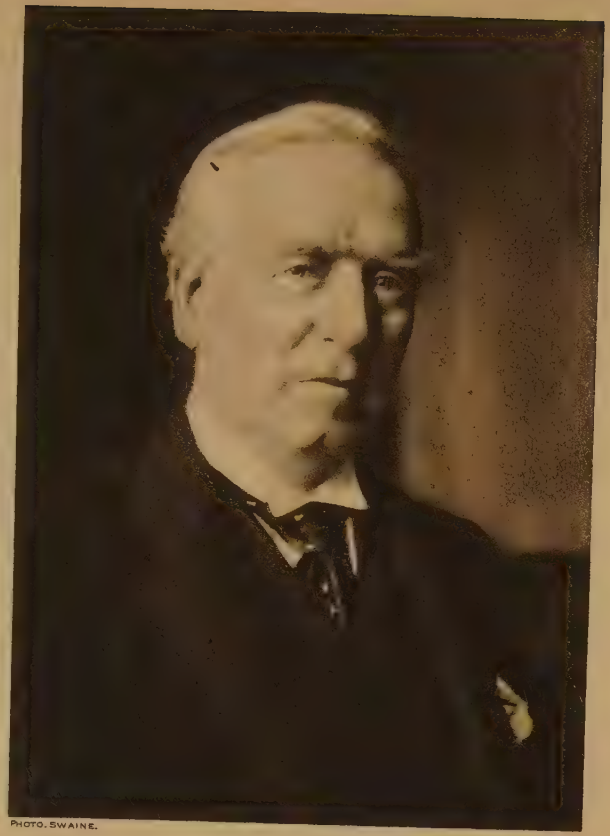


PHOTO. SWAINE.

THE RT. HON. H.H. ASQUITH.

PHOTO. ELLIOTT & FRY.

THE RT. HON. WINSTON L.S. CHURCHILL.

"Poor Morier has gone at last. You must have known him. In one respect he rose to the ideal which I keep before the minds of my sons, and of all young diplomatists whom I know. He took trouble, and a great deal of trouble, to understand the countries in which he served, but in many other ways he left much to be desired, while his temper was that of a demon.

"We were at Balliol together from 1847-49, though he was a couple of years or a trifle more my senior, and we were often in close sympathy in political and economic questions; very intimate acquaintances, though never exactly friends. He was too capricious and self-willed to be capable of friendship, save perhaps for Jowett, through whom it was that he ever became *homme sérieux* at all."

There was one person I always liked to see whenever I happened to be in London, and that was Lecky, the critic and historian. Lecky possessed the quality of exercising a peculiar fascination over those who knew him well. His conversation was never trivial, never dull, never commonplace, even when it covered commonplace subjects. Whenever I used to see him at any of the parties at which I was present, I tried to get near him at the first opportunity. He was a charming man, and one from whom one could not fail to learn something in some way or other. Mrs. Lecky, who was Dutch by birth, made a fitting companion for her distinguished husband, and in her way possessed just such a remarkable mind as he did. They used to give dinners that were delightful, and luncheons that were still more pleasant, because one

could then see them at their best, and enjoy their society better than at any large party.

I did not meet many journalists in London, with the exception of one who is remembered to this day by all who knew him. I mean Moberly Bell, the manager of *The Times*, with his leonine head, his loud voice and domineering personality. Moberly Bell went everywhere, and knew everybody, and entertained everybody of note at dinners which were as amusing as they were execrable. He invited about three times as many people as his rooms would contain, but no one ever dreamed of refusing, for there one would meet all the leading men and politicians in England, with a good sprinkling of foreigners, together with the loveliest women and the smartest men in London.

Who has forgotten Moberly Bell? He had managed to create for himself quite a unique position, and was more and better initiated into all the intricacies of foreign politics than many diplomats and statesmen. He had just enough love for intrigue to care for every kind of gossip, and just enough discretion to refrain from showing how much he knew—or guessed; for he used to guess a good deal. A most cheerful companion and excellent host, he contrived to make it the fashion to visit his house, and under the pretext of having strict Conservative principles, had more than once procured the support of the *Thunderer* to the Liberal party. At *The Times* office he was execrated, as he was supposed to have changed the spirit and direction of the paper, and to have introduced a taint of commercialism that previously had been unknown within its precincts. He was essentially

a man of his time, caring for nothing but success: determined, bold, keenly enterprising, but kind and genial, and quite content to know that he was a power in his way, with whom other powers had to reckon.

Mrs. Moberly Bell was a charming woman, a keen observer, and possessed wonderful tact. She never intruded or imposed herself on anyone, but under her exquisite courtesy there lay a good deal of personal intelligence which rendered her in *tête-à-tête* talks extremely entertaining.

There are many other people about whom I should like to say something—people who helped to make London the delightful place it was. Space fails me, and yet there are many names which come back to my memory, each worthy of a special chapter. For instance, Lady Stanley of Alderley, who at eighty-five or eighty-six used to go out to dinner and enjoy life more than many girls of eighteen; Lady Dorothy Nevill, whose witty books have given us so good an idea of what society was in the middle and latter part of last century; Lord and Lady Reay: he a poet, a scholar, a man of letters, and a member of many academies, a Dutchman by birth and an Englishman by education, who spoke French like a native; and his wife, stately, polite, fond of entertaining and exceedingly generous. Their house was one of the most hospitable in London, and their dinners and lunches had no equal. And Hamilton Aïdé, that novelist who was so essentially a man of the world that no reception seemed complete without his presence. And Sir Henry Stanley, the traveller, who was lionised by society until his death, but whom I disliked.

One other notability I should mention who was associated with Gladstone. At the time I first met him, Lord Rosebery was at the zenith of his fame, having won the Derby and awaiting the moment when he should be called to take the place of Mr. Gladstone. He is a man of refined tastes, great erudition, a politician more by chance than by real ambition. He reminded me of a man who was eager to rise, but who, having done so, was unable to remain on the height to which, more than his own efforts, events had carried him. Lord Rosebery was the historian who perhaps had been the first Englishman to understand the psychology of the great Napoleon; but he was an accidental statesman, in whom strong principles were missing, convictions were wanting, and in whom a curious mixture of lassitude and energy had combated until they had made him a failure and politically buried him before his time.

All these folk whom I watched pass by were full of interest to me, and perhaps in that agglomeration of remarkable and curious men and women gathered together in one place, London is a unique spot. In other countries one can find, perhaps, just as many learned and clever persons; but then they live in various parts, mostly in a set of their own, where it is next to impossible for the outsider to obtain an entrance, whereas in London one meets them at every turn.

Once at a garden party—I cannot just remember where—my attention was directed to a small, rather stout person, who spoke and moved with that freedom which belongs to people who know they have become famous. When I asked who it was, the reply

rather staggered me. It was Miss Marie Corelli, whom I had been longing to know, and whose wonderful book, "Barabbas," had moved me so deeply. I was the more astonished, I expect, because her personality was so different from what, in my mind, I had pictured it. I had imagined a tall, slim, lily-like woman, with a soft voice and dreamy eyes, and I was considerably amused to discover how far from my expectation was this author, who undoubtedly possessed a wonderful genius which could move her readers intensely.

There is another woman among the authors of the latter half of last century whom I knew rather well, but in Florence. I mean "Ouida," whose books made such a stir at one time. She was a most original person, who possessed power and strength in her writings, although some of her books were too exaggerated to influence those who read them. "Ouida" was essentially a sympathetic person, if only through her love for animals, her pity for everything that suffered, and for every human misery or affliction.

Decidedly London was a charming place, and among the many memories that crowd one upon another in my already long life, those connected with my numerous journeys in England rank among the most pleasant, and are those I like best to dwell upon.

CHAPTER III

MORE ENGLISH IMPRESSIONS

WE went much about London during the three months we spent there, and saw almost everything and everybody worth seeing. Among the people with whom I became more intimate was my friend Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, formerly Governor of Madras. He lived within easy distance from London, at York House, Twickenham, and used to give pleasant little Sunday parties. This historic mansion had been the home of Anne Hyde, the first wife of James II., and later on had sheltered the exiled Orleans family. Lady Grant Duff was also an amiable woman, rather rigid, and with less broadness of view in her character than her husband, but very highly cultured, intelligent though shy, and completely overawed by her eldest daughter, an enterprising young lady who was a perfect example of what a latter-day girl wishes to be.

Sir Mountstuart was one of the gentlest men I have ever met. He had an undercurrent of dreamy philosophy, allied to that high serenity one meets only in very lofty characters. He was a lover of everything beautiful, everything good, everything that rose above the usual fret of earthly existence. He was not a man of action, and it was difficult to believe

he could ever have played a part in the political life of his country; he seemed so much more fit to spend his time thinking about the great people he had met and the great books he had read, among the lovely roses of his peaceful garden.

I often took opportunity to visit York House, and we remained in correspondence with its master for a long time. He had been a great friend and admirer of Renan, about whom he has written a book which I think is the best character study that has ever been made of the French writer, whose turn of mind harmonised so well with that of Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff's, though Renan's, perhaps, had more objectivity in it, but with just as much indulgence. After his admiration for Renan's books Sir Mountstuart cared for a little volume that drew on the head of its author so many curses from the Roman clergy. It was that essentially Catholic, pious book, Mrs. Augustus Craven's "Récit d'une Sœur"; it seemed about the last work that could have appealed to a critical Protestant mind. But then, was Sir Mountstuart a Protestant? He always appeared to me to represent the perfect type of a religious freethinker, of one who worshipped God in His works, who rejected superstition in whatever shape or form it presented itself to him, and who liked to pray where it appealed to him to do so, without inquiring as to the creed of the church where he had found his Maker present. He, rather, only saw in it the place where the divine spark had touched him and made him bend the knee before a divinity he believed in.

Very different from my old friend was Mr. Glad-

stone, whom I met for the first time at a dinner given at the Russian Embassy. The moment I had been introduced, the words of Mérimée concerning him recurred to my mind, when he had written after having been asked to stay at Hawarden for a week-end :

" Mr. Gladstone produced on me the impression of being at times a man of genius, and at others a child." Further on he added : " There is in him something of the child, of the statesman, and of the madman."

And certainly the framing of the Home Rule Bill justified this appreciation.

Personally, I have never understood the great charm which Mr. Gladstone was supposed to possess. It is true that I have never heard him speak in public, but in private life he had the habit, which jarred considerably on the nerves of those with whom he happened to be surrounded, of talking with them as if he were speaking to the whole world. One could feel that the people with whom he was entertaining himself were only for him accessory beings ; he was thinking the whole time of the impression which he produced on the world in general, and even on those to whom he did not directly address himself. He was continually listening to his own voice and looking around him in order to notice whether Peter, with whom he had nothing to do, had listened and was admiring his words just as much as Paul, to whom they had been addressed, and with whom he was discussing some question or other.

This seemed to me to be an inferior trait in the character of a statesman, and it explains perhaps why

he never succeeded in imposing his personality even upon his own friends and supporters with the strength displayed, for instance, by Lord Beaconsfield who, very differently from him, would have taken the same care to convince a six-year-old child of what he wanted him to learn as any political assembly before which he had to unfold a development in the system of government.

The weak point in Mr. Gladstone's personality was his vanity and the admiration it inspired him to entertain for his own perfections. He believed seriously in everything concerning himself, even in the good intentions which he only imagined he possessed. He did not admit any weakness in his personality, not even that of his age. I am pretty sure that if he ever thought about his eighty-four or eighty-five years it was only in changing the order of their numerals. He possessed aspirations, but not real statesmanlike faculties, and was by instinct a kind of revolutionary individual who destroyed what he found in his way as naturally as he ate his dinner, but who, having received a refined education, imagined he was not a Radical, in the same way that certain people imagine they are clean because they wash their hands. Whenever he took an idea into his head he would not see anything beyond it, he would listen to no advice or criticism, nor even hear reason on what he was about to do. His attitude was like a firework which begins with a fuse and ends in smoke.

Queen Victoria bore with him, whilst abominating him in the secrecy of her soul, and whenever she found

herself in his presence she used to confine herself strictly to her position of a Constitutional Sovereign, refusing to discuss with him any political question. Her common sense, of which she had a considerable amount, suffered in having to witness the want of real logic which constituted the essence of Mr. Gladstone's character, and she realised but too well that in politics it is impossible to be ruled by words or fine phrases. Eloquence alone has, perhaps, thrust a nation along one path or another, but it has never saved it from any ill or misfortune, and Queen Victoria was too sincere a patriot not to understand this fact.

To give an idea of the hatred inspired by Mr. Gladstone in certain Conservative circles, I will relate an anecdote that will illustrate it better than anything I could say. I had an old friend in the person of the late Lord Wharncliffe, regarding him as the personification of a great English nobleman, whose wife, let it be said *en passant*, did not look upon me with over-indulgent eyes, and certainly did not exhibit any amiable feelings where I was concerned. Well, just before I left London I went to say good-bye to Lord Wharncliffe, whom I found suffering from a violent attack of gout. When I expressed to him my sympathy, he suddenly replied : " Yes, I am suffering very much ; but still one thing comforts me, that is the thought that it isn't the tenth part of what that old devil of a Gladstone will endure in hell ! "

Mrs. Gladstone was also a peculiar sort of person ; any amount of humorous stories were related concerning her. I cannot help reproducing two of them, as they are rather out of the common, and have the

merit of being funny. One day the Prime Minister and his wife had been asked to dine at Windsor Castle. The guests had all assembled, and the Queen herself had made her entrance, but Mrs. Gladstone was missing. At last, getting impatient, Her Majesty was about to pass into the dining-room when, breathless and flurried, the consort of England's Premier entered, draped in a bath towel over which she had pinned a black lace shawl, more or less effectively. Very unhappy and distressed, she explained that her maid had forgotten to put into her trunk the bodice of her dress, and that she had been obliged to supply as well as she could the deficiency.

As it was already long past the time when dinner ought to have been served, the Queen took her seat at once without further explanations, and the meal proceeded to its end; but when leaving the dining-room the Princess Beatrice noticed something hanging on to Mrs. Gladstone's train, and asked her what it was. It turned out to be the missing bodice, that had been pinned on to its legitimate skirt, a fact which its owner had not perceived whilst dressing for dinner, through the usual hurry which characterised everything she did.

The other story is rather more difficult to relate, and I must ask the reader's indulgence beforehand. One day Mr. Gladstone was to speak at a public meeting; his wife, fearing he might get hungry, had provided herself with some sandwiches, which she carried with her to have ready in any case; but, not knowing where she could put them without people noticing them, she at last decided to hide them in

the bodice of her dress. Mr. Gladstone began his speech, when suddenly those sitting next to Mrs. Gladstone saw that she was getting very fidgety and looking most miserable. Inquiries elicited the fact that the heat had caused the unfortunate sandwiches, which were to refresh the Prime Minister, to become warm, and so the mustard they contained was producing on the bearer of them—for one could hardly call her anything else—the impression of a very large sinapism!

Whether these anecdotes were true or not it is difficult to say; but poor Mrs. Gladstone, by her demeanour, savoured but too often of ridicule. Only her admiration for her William was most touching and sincere—more so, perhaps, than his repeated assurances of his great love for this faithful wife.

Speaking about the Liberal Party reminds me of a charming definition which I heard Lord Beaconsfield make one day, and which is as delightful as all his sayings were. "A Conservative," he told me, "is a man who changes his shirt every day; the Liberal does it once a week, and the Radical whenever he finds the opportunity."

Poor Lord Beaconsfield had been dead a number of years at the time of the particular London season I am describing, but Lord Salisbury and his clever wife were still of this world and dispensed a truly royal hospitality at Hatfield House. I was very fond of Lady Salisbury, who had always treated me with the greatest kindness. She was in her way just as remarkable as her wonderful husband, full of humour and fun, never pedantic, nor overbearing; indulgent

to others and so truly kind, in spite of her sharp tongue, which many people feared, though quite unjustly, because she would never have harmed anyone. She made a worthy mistress for her splendid castle and a noble successor to all the dames of high lineage that had preceded her.

Hatfield is a grand place, full of historical remembrances; to begin with, a collection of arms that had belonged to the Armada, and ending with more modern souvenirs, which all bore witness to the important part the lords of that stately manor had played in the history of their country. When in the evening, at sunset, one sat on the terrace, with the old pile and its ivy-covered walls towering behind, impressions without number crowded on the mind and awoke memories of noble deeds done and statesmanlike acts performed about which one had heard and read, and which suddenly took on an eerie reality that carried one back to long bygone and glorious times, when Queen Elizabeth had walked in the alleys of that park and ridden through the forests surrounding it.

Of all the stately homes of England I have visited, none has left on me such an enduring impression as Hatfield House. Wollaton Hall was perhaps just as stately, Penshurst Place just as ancient, Knole just as full of remembrances; but what made the particular charm of Hatfield was to be found nowhere else, perhaps because nowhere else could one meet with such perfect harmony between a place and its owners. And whereas, so often, a master's death changes everything in the home where he moved, at Hatfield I feel sure such has not been the case, because the present

Lord and Lady Salisbury are in their way just as remarkable personages as the famous Minister of Queen Victoria and his wife, and the spirit which pervaded the old domain of the Cecils must be as alive to-day as when, over twenty years ago, I was its guest and enjoyed the privilege of long conversations with its master.

Every memory I have of London is full of exceeding interest. I do not think that in any other city one can find such a number of clever and highly cultured and intelligent people gathered together as is the case during the few weeks of the London season. England's metropolis draws back to it whoever has once learned to know it and to taste its pleasures. My daughter, in spite of her extreme youth, felt this just as much as I did, and it was with renewed interest and eager anticipation that we returned the next summer and saw once again all our friends and acquaintances of the year before, adding a few more to their number as time went on.

I wish I could now remember the names of all those we saw, and of all the places we went to. I must, however, mention a ball at Chelsea House, at which the late Lady Cadogan presided with that grace that made her such an inimitable hostess. Then, too, there were some entertainments at Holland House, so full of treasures, rare works of art, and that appearance of rural solitude which renders it such a unique spot amidst the bustle and traffic of London. We were guests on another day at a garden party at Montagu House, where the wonderful collection of miniatures attracted my attention.

I remember, too, we attended two or three receptions at Devonshire House, where the lively and once lovely Duchess shone in the splendour of her diamonds and in all the pride of her high estate and yellow wig. I have never understood why she wore that wig, which certainly did not make her look younger. She was one of the cleverest women of her generation, and she had a knowledge of the world to which but few attain. She had achieved the greatest social triumphs she could ever have aspired to, and yet she could not be made to understand that her regular, statuesque features would have produced a far more pleasing impression if she had accepted the white hair that formed the natural appanage of her many years, and bravely realised that the golden locks which had made her beauty so renowned in a distant past were now inappropriate. However, seen standing at the head of her fine white marble staircase, she appeared quite queenly, if slightly disdainful, whenever someone whom she did not know well, but had felt obliged to invite, passed before her, bending low as he might have done to a sovereign. The Duke, with the broad blue ribbon of the Garter across his breast, stood beside her, pompous, bored, but every inch a grand seigneur.

The Duchess of Devonshire was not liked by everybody. She was, however, in reality extremely kind and good-natured — at least, had been so as Duchess of Manchester, when, perhaps, she had not been quite so sure of her position as at Devonshire House. She was always amiable, and held to the maxim that an invitation costs nothing to

give and provides one with another enemy when refused.

Another Duchess, formidable in appearance, and stiff as only an English Duchess can be, was the mother of Lord Rosebery, the Duchess of Cleveland. When I was introduced to her at a house where I happened to be one afternoon, she began by looking at me from head to foot, then said loudly, "The Princess Radziwill? I do not want to know her"; then turning round, as if intending to clear a doubt that perhaps arose in her breast, "I hope you are not the Princess Anthony Radziwill, because in that case I don't want to make your acquaintance." I hastened to reassure her as to that point, then mildly inquired what she knew about my sister-in-law that could have made her so determined to refuse her acquaintance. Upon this the old lady confided to me that whilst at Constantinople she had become very friendly with the Princess Radolin, the wife of the German Ambassador there, the niece of my said sister-in-law, who had taken her out into society, her own mother being dead. One day, for some reason, my sister-in-law boxed her ears. The Princess had never forgotten or forgiven the fact, and years later had related the story to the Duchess of Cleveland, who thereupon had determined if ever she met the Princess Anthony Radziwill to make her feel her utter disapprobation of her conduct in regard to her motherless niece. When I had explained to her that I was quite a different person, the old lady thawed a little, and even relented so far as to hold out to me two icy fingers when I took leave of her.

High-Born Hostesses

London was very gay during the season of the year 1894, the principal event of which was the birth of the present Prince of Wales. A few hostesses who generally did not indulge in much entertaining, gave balls rivalling each other in splendour and in beauty of floral decoration. The Countess Percy invited her friends to the house of her father-in-law, the Duke of Northumberland, and though that entertainment was afterwards pronounced to have been one of the dullest ever seen, I cannot say I carried away with me any impression of the kind. The Countess was a real great lady, dignified, serene, serious, polite, without ostentation, who bore herself with such perfect dignity that many a Queen might have envied her. She had been remarkably pretty in her youth, and, though decidedly dowdy in her dress, had preserved the regularity of her features and the lovely colour of her hair. She was the sister of the Marquis of Lorne and the eldest daughter of the Duke of Argyll, and a great favourite with Queen Victoria, as I was afterwards told.

Lord Egerton of Tatton, who, during that same summer, was to marry my friend the Duchess of Buckingham and Chandos, also gave a ball in his fine residence at St. James's Square, and the Countess of Ellesmere invited us to her receptions in that splendid Bridgewater House, with its priceless picture gallery. And then we had the opportunity to admire the beautiful young Duchess of Sutherland, looking like a fairy, in that palace called Stafford House, which is so famous in the annals of London.

I have just mentioned the loveliness of the Duchess of Sutherland. To my mind she was the prettiest

woman in England, that country of pretty women. Less classical in features than the Duchess of Montrose, less brilliant than the famous Duncombe sisters, who, with the exception of Lady Helen Vincent, were rather too massive in form and figure, she was, perhaps, sweeter and more graceful, having a peculiar charm all her own, and a gliding, stately kind of walk that was altogether fascinating.

The Dowager Lady Dudley, too, was still one of the beauties of the day, and, indeed, notwithstanding her grown-up children, could very well compete with many a younger woman. She has always had my utmost admiration, as she realised in my eyes the perfection of a great lady. The Duchess of Abercorn, too, was another great lady of striking personality. She had a wonderfully dignified air when she entered the ballroom at Buckingham Palace, with her priceless sapphires round her neck. My admiration also went to the Duchess of Buccleuch, that ideal of a *grande dame*, so simple was she in her manners and so stately in her bearing.

We made several visits to country houses during that summer, amongst others, to Waddesdon Manor, where Baron Ferdinand Rothschild—"Baron Ferdy," as his friends used to call him—entertained us with that rich hospitality which is proverbial at all the Rothschilds' houses. Baron Ferdy was a delightful man, clever, well-read, artistic in his tastes, a lover of everything that was beautiful, an entirely pleasant companion, and the owner of one of the most beautiful houses it has ever been my lot to see. His pictures, especially those of the English school, were

priceless, and everything about his home appealed to a cultured person's taste.

We remained in London until the end of July, then settled in a house near Sevenoaks in Kent, where we stayed until the autumn. Several times whilst there I saw the late Lord Stanhope and his delightful, clever wife, who showed me all the treasures of Chevening, their lovely home. It is full of curious and interesting things, especially the library, with its wealth of books and manuscripts, among which figure the original letters of Lord Chesterfield to his illegitimate son, Philip Stanhope.

Montreal House, of which Alice, Lady Amherst, was at that time the mistress, was also a place full of interest, and its amiable hostess a person it was impossible to know and not to like. In fact, I can truly say that nearly all the people I met in England were well worth knowing, and had either one thing or another to recommend them. Few were dull or insignificant, and what perhaps I appreciated most in English society was the perfect independence that presided over it, and the freedom with which one was able to choose friends and acquaintances.

In September I spent a few days in Scotland, visiting Edinburgh on my way, where a very pleasant man, Mr. Maxwell Stuart, was kind enough to show me everything worth seeing. I had been introduced to him at Everingham Park, where we had spent a few days with Lord and Lady Herries, the parents of the present Duchess of Norfolk.

I was intensely interested in seeing the curiosities of the Scottish capital, and would dearly like to go

there again. It has quite a charm of its own, and appeals to the mind as well as to any artistic leanings one might have. Whilst at Holyrood we were shown over the apartments occupied by the ill-fated Mary Stuart. The old keeper, when he reached a small staircase behind the bedroom of the Queen, showed us a brown spot on the floor, and suddenly said, in a solemn, mournful tone, " This is the spot where David Rizzio was murdered, and," he added in an undertone, " I paint this stain every morning afresh ! "

Seeing us burst out laughing, and feeling evidently very affronted at our hilarity, he began explaining to us that some years ago the old floor had been removed and replaced by a new one, but then the numerous Americans who visited Holyrood Palace became so indignant at not finding the famous bloodstains about which tradition spoke, and questioned him with such severity, that at last, in sheer desperation, the old man determined to satisfy them, and since that time had " painted afresh every morning " a stain supposed to represent the blood of Darnley's victim.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLAND THROUGH THE EYES OF A FOREIGNER

IF anyone asked me what I believed to be necessary for the completion of a young man's education, I should without the slightest hesitation reply, "a year or two in England." For in order to understand the true significance of the word "civilisation," it is necessary to see something of English life, study English politeness, as well as to understand English broadness of view and tolerance of every opinion.

Politics also ought to be studied in England, if only from the practical point of view. The struggle for political supremacy exists nowhere as in England, and nowhere either is it conducted on more courteous lines than in that country. Indeed, for anyone who knows what politics mean in France or in Germany, and who has witnessed the battles fought in those countries on questions of State, it is soothing to think that there is one country at least where this fight for supremacy does not interfere in any way with private or social relations. What must impress every foreigner is the perfect urbanity that exists among the leaders of the different parties in their conduct toward each other. At all the receptions of the Head of the Government, one can meet the leaders of the Opposition and its principal members, which alone

proves the great superiority of the moral and intellectual standard of Englishmen over other nations of Europe.

This side of the national character, I regret to say, has not been sufficiently appreciated abroad, and yet it more deserves study than many other things that have attracted the attention of the foreign public. This influence also permeates the social life of London, and considerably adds to its pleasantness. For one thing, it gives the opportunity to every striking personality to mix with all classes of society, and does not confine people to a certain circle.

Life in England is conducted on broad lines, from the intellectual even more than from the material point of view. There is a constant interchange of opinions, and everybody is interested in everything that is going on.

On the other hand, there seems to be, in high society circles, the absence of that home life which we have been taught to think of as the exclusive property of the English nation. Home life in the upper classes does not exist. It has been undermined and destroyed by the mania for constant travelling, and that restlessness which has taken hold of society in general. In no other land do such beautiful country homes exist as in England, yet they are seldom inhabited. London has become a vast inn, where one spends at least four out of the seven days in the week. Indeed, the home is often forsaken for the hotel, and the custom now prevalent of entertaining one's friends to lunch or dinner at the Ritz or the Carlton has gradually done away with home life as it was understood formerly.

In high society, how little remains of the quietness of the Sabbath of former days, when people could enjoy a real rest and spend a few hours among the roses in their gardens. That illusion of the foreigner has been shattered. We imagined an English home as something sweet and solemn, where the mistress gathered her children around her, and where family prayers and the Bible alternated with afternoon tea and toast. All this has ceased to exist. Children are confined to their nursery and scarcely ever see their parents, who in autumn are always rushing about between their London and their country houses, those of their friends, and Biarritz, Paris, Monte Carlo, Egypt, or India at other seasons of the year. English life nowadays is spent in railway trains and motor cars. There is no steadiness and scarcely any seriousness in the smart set.

There are, however, a good many people who, happily, are not of that calibre. Thinking about them reminds me of one hospitable house in London—that of Lord and Lady Brassey; she is one of the most exquisite women it has ever been my good chance to meet, and one in whom natural sweetness blends with acquired gentleness and learning. Her conversation is more than entertaining; it is delightful in its simple earnestness and entire absence of affectation. She is a perfect example of the English gentlewoman, caring for her house and home, and at the same time shining in the world with that peculiar grace that only a high-bred woman can possess.

Another couple who have always kept up the old English traditions for hospitality are Lord and Lady

Jersey, whose garden parties at Osterley are a feature of the London season. You meet there all the interesting people of the capital, and can beguile an afternoon in the kind of conversation you appreciate most, either serious or frivolous, or can wander under the old beech trees, or sit on the smooth lawns, gazing at gaily dressed women and attractive men, and enjoy a picture of English life such as you will seldom find elsewhere.

Garden parties are a great feature in London society. They constitute in the busy life which is the characteristic of the great city a most pleasant and easy way of meeting one's friends, without the rush that is invariably associated with every evening party, where people come and go, and very often do not reach the top of the staircase, so eager are they to push on somewhere else, so that their names should appear the next day in the *Morning Post* as being present at the function.

It is so different at such places as Osterley Park or Holland House; one feels that one has the right to beguile an hour or two, and to admire one's surroundings, to think of those distant times when Queen Elizabeth reigned, and where the great Burghley ruled, without having to remember that Lady So-and-So, or the Countess So-and-So has asked you to appear in the evening, very often to be seen by everybody in her house except by herself.

I once asked a very witty foreigner whom I met in London what were his impressions of the season there. His reply was a characteristic one: "One eats too many strawberries, and meets too many

people." That was the foreigner who studied nothing and who looked at everything, and that is not the impression one ought to carry away from the capital of the world, which is one of those delightful, strange, incomprehensible places where one feels lost at first, but where gradually so many attractions are discovered that one is loath to leave it.

Talking about London hostesses, I find I have not mentioned old Mrs. Lowther and her receptions at Lowther Lodge, one of the prettiest, quaintest houses in the great city. It savoured of a Tudor Castle and a Georgian mansion; the architecture was as lovely as it was full of anachronisms. Here everybody worth knowing in the world would be seen, and here, too, the most delightful people in England had congregated at one time or another. At Lowther Lodge, with its lovely pictures, its large bowls of flowers scattered throughout the wide rooms, it was always possible to find a quiet spot and enjoy a quiet talk. The hosts were always solicitously eager for their guests' enjoyment and left them wisely alone to seek it unmolested by any interferences such as music or singing, or any other of these accompaniments of ordinary afternoon parties that are such nuisances to the man who wants to look at things around him and listen to what is said.

I have always regretted not having known London before the invasion of the newly-rich element. It must have been even more pleasant than it is now. Being an old woman myself, I confess regretting the Victorian period, before South Africa had been invented, America had been discovered, and the various ghettos of the world had opened their doors to allow their former

inmates to escape into a more hospitable land. At present the emulation for luxury and extravagance has done away with a great deal of the sedateness and dignity which characterised hostesses of former times in London. It is a pity, a very great pity; but it has not interfered with the principal characteristics of English life; it has only brought new elements into it; for better or for worse, it is not for me to say, but elements that have only added to the impression of grandeur that cannot fail to strike the foreigner when he arrives for the first time.

Politics also have undergone a change which is incontestable, and which is perhaps more felt than seen at political receptions such as are constantly given during the season. New people are invited to these; they appear in the same style of dress as the others; they seem to differ in no wise from the supporters of Lord Beaconsfield or Lord Salisbury, but yet are entirely different, both by their education and by their temperament.

The advent of democratic government has necessarily brought along with it a race of politicians and their wives who arrive in London for the season. When they return they carry back with them in triumph to their provincial homes the card of invitation which they had received for a reception at the Foreign Office, or at some other official place, which with swelling pride they stick on the mantelpiece of their best parlour in Manchester or Liverpool, or any other spot where they may happen to live.

PART II

Memories of Germany

CHAPTER I

THE EMPEROR WILLIAM I

CERTAIN readers of history from the surface have lightly classified the first German Emperor as a weak man under the thumb of Bismarck. He was not. No man in the whole of Europe had a clearer discernment or foresight, yet his was a rare and noble personality. His first concern was ever to serve his country, even though the serving were best accomplished with others as prime movers.

The Emperor William I. was approaching his eightieth year at the time I had the honour to be presented to him. He was spoken of as an old man of declining powers, if not near his end. His Court, indeed, appeared to be much more convinced of his advanced age than he was himself. I had heard so much concerning the precautions which, according to some people of his Court, he ought to have taken, but to which he obstinately refused to conform, that I was expecting to see an almost decrepit man, borne down by the weight of his years.

I was extremely surprised, therefore, on the first occasion that I met the Emperor, to find myself in the presence of a man vigorous and active in his movements, whose blue eyes retained the vivacity usually associated with youth, and whose walk still

possessed vigour and elasticity. The attitude of the Emperor was kind in the extreme, his voice expressed sympathy, and it had an intonation which gave token of rare qualities of heart and of mind. He had a curious habit when he was talking to anyone of bending his head in such a manner that it seemed to add to his height instead of taking away from it. Always very neat in his dress, he had a certain coquetry in the way in which he arranged his hair in order to hide his baldness. A long lock from the back was carried to the front, where it was fastened by means of a black thread to another coming from his forehead. This considerably added to the charm of his face. The Emperor could never have been a handsome young man, but in age he was imposing.

Everyone who knew the Emperor liked him; the one who loved him the most, perhaps, or certainly who served him the best, was Prince Bismarck. He held his sovereign in great respect, which was the more strange as he did not admire his intelligence. When the Iron Chancellor found himself alone beside the dead body of his master immediately after the latter's demise, he shed bitter tears. These tears constituted the truest and purest homage to the great monarch whose name will live for ever in the history of Germany and of its development in Europe.

The Emperor's mind was not deep and certainly not brilliant, but he was a man gifted with strong common sense, and especially a man who always knew what his duty required of him. He was also persevering in character, and his word could always be relied upon. He did not read much, and generally confined his

attention to works which treated of purely military matters, but I remember that one evening, during a little party given by the Empress, one of the persons present alluded to one of Renan's books that had just appeared, and quoted a phrase from it referring to the necessity which exists for every human being to work for the general good without hoping for a reward, in like manner as the slaves of the Egyptian Pharaohs worked in the construction of the Pyramids. "The men have disappeared, but the Pyramids stand to this present day," concluded the writer. "I share this opinion," said the Emperor. "We ought to work for those who follow us in life without asking ourselves the wherefore of the labour to which we are condemned."

These words epitomise the whole life of William I., as well as the principles which constantly inspired his actions and helped him in everything he attempted. In his youth he had witnessed dark days which had saddened his Fatherland: he had never forgotten the disaster of Jena; he remembered the tears of his mother, Queen Louise, when she had been obliged to fly to Memel. The lamentations of the unfortunate woman were always ringing in his ears, and it can be affirmed, without fear of being mistaken, that the longing to avenge the humiliation inflicted at that time, not only upon his country, but also upon his house, never left him.

He never spoke about that tragedy, but it was always in his thoughts—during his childish games, as well as in the days of his youthful enjoyments; later on, when the storms of 1848 seemed to prophesy for him destitution and exile rather than the fulfilment of

his dreams of glory, those thoughts persisted. They lingered when he had to take up the reins of government and attempt to repair the mistakes of his predecessors; in the days of his great successes, as well as in the moments of his reverses, he remembered them. They were in his thoughts when the angry crowd invaded his palace at Berlin and obliged him to escape in disguise, and when that same crowd accompanied him to the railway station on his departure for the field of battle in 1870. He thought about the tragedy, too, on that triumphant afternoon when he returned to his joyful capital, and the whole nation acclaimed the new victorious Cæsar who was bringing back his laurels; he thought about it probably more than ever when, a few hours after this glorious entry, he went to kneel down beside his mother's grave in the mausoleum of Charlottenburg. For all those who have known the Emperor, it is impossible to doubt for a single moment that, even in that solemn instant, it was to his people, after Almighty God, that he attributed the successes which had been his, and that, in his mind, he believed that he had only been one of the many workmen who had toiled in the erection of "the Pyramid."

In order to understand thoroughly this simple and great character, one must have studied the history of Prussia, and especially that of the House of Hohenzollern; one must have visited some of the old German towns and have become imbued with the facts which brought about and which accompanied the great work of the Reformation.

If Luther had not existed, the importance acquired

by Prussia in the history of Europe would have been impossible, and it is quite certain that Baron Stockmar, the friend of the Prince Consort, was right when he called Frederick William IV. the greatest Protestant monarch in Europe, and advised the marriage of the Princess Royal of England to the future Emperor Frederick III.

Many members of the House of Hohenzollern were gentle and artistic, notwithstanding opinions which have been expressed to the contrary. Protestantism alone, with its austere and sometimes even narrow ideas, was capable of transforming them into strong and virile characters. Under the influence of the religious wars they became hardened, and in defending their faith, and perhaps also on account of that faith, took for their chief aim in life a disinterested devotion to their Fatherland. An atmosphere less heavy than the one in which they had grown up would not have allowed them to resist the instincts of their nature, in itself neither hard nor cruel. But the series of reverses which had followed one upon the other during the whole course of their family history had ripened them and developed in them that instinct and that feeling of duty which was the most prominent feature in the character of William I.

His career as Prince of Prussia, and later on as Prince Regent, is too well known to need reference here. Besides, I am not writing an historical book, merely relating personal remembrances. I cannot help, however, drawing attention to the numerous difficulties which William encountered during the long years which preceded his accession to the throne. He was not at

all in sympathy with the opinions of his elder brother, King Frederick William IV. He interpreted quite differently the meaning of the duties of a sovereign, and he was especially hostile to the opinions of his pietist brother, which he considered to be fatal to the greatness of his country. Notwithstanding, however, this private divergence of opinion, the loyalty which he bore towards the head of his house and his dynasty restrained him from any public manifestation which might be construed into an expression of disapproval of his brother. If his Court was considered by many people as a centre of opposition to the King, it was more the fault of the Princess of Prussia than his own, because he always kept studiously silent whenever he found himself in the presence of things which his mind could not sanction. He relaxed only his habitual reserve when he was alone with the King.

His position as Regent was even more delicate than it had been while he was only heir-presumptive to the Crown. Though the illness from which the King suffered had been declared incurable, the Prince could not impose his will in matters of State, as he would have done had he alone been responsible. He was in a false position, and one rendered more trying because he was not popular among the masses of the nation, who did not approve of his plans concerning the reorganisation of the army. On the eve of her greatest military successes Prussia felt afraid; she believed less in her own future than did the Prince Regent.

It was William's supreme happiness always to have kept his faith in the glorious destiny of his people, and to have believed in it with all the energy of his serious

EMPEROR WILLIAM I OF PRUSSIA.

and entirely straight nature. Without that conviction, which he cherished throughout his life, Prussia would never have seen the successes of Bismarck, Moltke, and Roon; she would never have earned the laurels of Sadowa, nor those of Sedan. Without the energy displayed by William I. it is most probable that if the old German Empire had ever been reconstituted, it would have been to the profit of the Habsburgs, and not to that of the Hohenzollerns.

By a strange irony of fate, the principal quality of the character of William I.—that of always knowing how to retire into the background, leaving to others the glory of the achievements which his own perseverance had prepared—was never sufficiently appreciated either by his family or by his surroundings, or even by his own people. On the contrary, the general opinion was that he allowed himself to be dominated and guided by his Chancellor. How very few people knew or understood that, by accepting this view of his relations with the great statesman to whom he felt so much indebted, the Emperor was performing a supreme sacrifice for the sake of that nation to which already he had sacrificed so much. Feeling more than he cared to own the weight of his years, he was quite content to allow his ship to be led by an experienced pilot, and he kept that pilot on the bridge, although his constant presence there appeared somewhat in the light of a personal humiliation of his own prestige. Even when he differed from Bismarck sufficiently to insist upon his own will being carried out—and this sometimes happened—he always did so in a way that none should guess he was doing it, so complete and perfect was

his disinterestedness, so entire was his abnegation to the prosperity of his loved country of all that related to himself.

No one who had insight and who studied without prejudice the influences which went to the moulding of the new kingdom, could doubt that Bismarck thoroughly understood the situation.

Where a man of less powerful personality would have taken advantage, he saw that in William I. was a true patriot, and their mutual love for the Fatherland brought them very close together. Brusque and domineering as Bismarck so often was, yet he was not a hard man, and if his epigram about Lord Salisbury were true, that he " was a lath of wood painted to look like iron," it could be said with equal certainty that Bismarck had a " soft heart hid in granite."

I used to see him together with William I., and as he looked at his Royal master his eyes told of his affection. I may be pardoned if I quote the exact words of my diary: " It was touching to watch the great Chancellor when he was speaking to William I.; the deference in his countenance, and the expression of his eyes in those moments, had some peculiar quality which could not but impress those who noticed the homage that he was paying to the old monarch. In his inmost soul he respected as much as he loved him; to him he had given all the admiration, all the affection that his stern heart was capable of feeling."

When, as it sometimes happened, Bismarck came into the room just as his aged monarch was being wearied and worried by the urgency of some persistent individual who wanted the Emperor to grant

something against his inclination or sense of equity, the quiet anger of Bismarck was barely concealed. He hated to see the kindly face of William troubled and uneasy, and would quickly have rid him of those "grinders of axes," as you say in England, had the Emperor been less patient and forbearing.

Another remarkable side in the personality of the Emperor was his dislike for intrigue of any kind, and his contempt for those who practised it. Constantly surrounded by people—even in his own family—who indulged in every possible form of intrigue, his straight common sense, his rare firmness of character, knew at once how much to put down to individual passions, and he soon succeeded in putting things upon their proper level, to reward those who deserved it, and to put aside those whose honesty appeared to him to be doubtful. Whilst everything around him, and even his own person, was eclipsed by the great figure of Bismarck, he nevertheless always remained the King, the only man before whom this rival of Richelieu consented to bow his head, and to whom he submitted his will.

I do not think I am mistaken when I say that one of the things which caused the most annoyance to the Emperor was the manner in which, after the proclamation of the new Empire, an attempt was made to modify the old ceremonial of the Prussian Court. The changes which were introduced were initiated by the Empress, who was helped by the great master of the ceremonies of that time, Count Stillfried. Both tried to give greater pomp to all the Court functions, and especially to establish a new order of precedence. This latter

exceedingly displeased William I. He did not care to see the persons whom he honoured with his attention in other places than where he had been accustomed to find them. It also annoyed him to witness the importance which certain persons attached to small privileges of rank, by which they revealed the narrowness of their minds. He himself was so kind, so devoid of the least shade of vanity, that it was painful to him to have to acknowledge the meanness of others, and especially of people among whom he had made his friends. This explains the sad and at the same time malicious smile with which he listened to the remark made by a lady he knew well during a reception at the old castle of Berlin. A few princesses present, displeased at the places allotted to them, began quarrelling as to whom should have precedence over the other; each claimed with energy a place which was considered to be the one of honour, and which was situated beside a door leading to the great gallery through which one had to pass to reach the ballroom of the palace. The Emperor happened to come in whilst these recriminations were going on, and having noticed an unaccustomed agitation among his guests, asked the lady in question what had happened. He received the following reply:

"Oh, it is nothing at all, sir; it is only these ladies who are disputing among themselves which shall have the honour to be put outside the door!"

All these quarrels concerning precedence occupied the attention of Berlin society to a considerable extent during the earliest years of the Empire. They constituted the small and petty sides of a society which

had never led an existence on broad lines, and the horizon of which had never gone beyond that of a German royal city of the eighteenth century. With time all this underwent a change; Berlin became a European centre, and its social importance equalled the political and military status which Prussia had acquired through the successes of her armies. But at the period of which I am writing, 1873–4, the evolution was just taking place, and naturally it claimed its victims.

CHAPTER II

DAILY LIFE AT THE COURT

THE Emperor and Empress lived an exceedingly simple and unpretentious life. Yet when it was necessary, there was a considerable display of pomp and even magnificence. The balls which the sovereigns gave frequently during the winter season were really splendid, though they did not rise to the heights of luxury which characterised the functions of the Russian Court.

One can say, though, that the festivities were attended with much dignity, and the crowds did not hustle one as they did on like occasions in St. Petersburg. In certain exceptional circumstances, as, for instance, on the Emperor's birthday, to celebrate which a considerable number of German princes were wont to assemble in the capital of the Empire, or when some foreign monarch came to Berlin on a visit, the receptions given in the old castle were organised on a grand scale, worthy of a great sovereign.

The Imperial carriages were exceedingly smart, the horses beautiful, and the liveries of the servants extremely dignified and in taste. Indeed, there was not lacking on these special occasions that air of formal pomp which is associated with Royal Courts of most ancient origins.

Royal Domesticity

In the ordinary regime of daily life there was a homeliness and modesty which had its pleasant features. The table was abundant, but not refined, and if the bill of fare did not, as a rule, distinguish itself with great variety, it was certainly copious. The Emperor, who was a great eater, but not at all a gourmet, was especially fond of most indigestible foods, such as lobster, *pâté de foie gras*, game of every kind, and a certain most abominable dish which consisted of eggs prepared with a sauce made from cheese. He hardly ever drank any other wine than sparkling Moselle, which was specially ordered for him from a wine merchant of Mayence, but the Imperial cellars were absolutely admirable, and only contained perfect wines, the brands of which were celebrated throughout Germany.

The royal kitchen was excellently managed, the head cook being a Frenchman, whilst the chief butler and his subordinates were Germans. The service, down to the smallest details, left nothing to be desired, but, except on the extraordinary occasions I have already mentioned, the whole management of the Court reminded one more of the household of a very rich private person than of the sumptuous palace of a great sovereign. At the same time, everyone felt at home and free from the usual ceremonial constraint.

The life of the Imperial couple was uniform and rarely subject to any changes in its daily routine. The Emperor used to get up quite early; in the course of the morning he received the reports of his ministers and the people who had asked for audiences. He usually granted these audiences in his study, which

was situated on the ground floor of the small palace that was his private property, and which he continued to occupy until his death.

This very small room, very simply arranged, had as principal piece of furniture a big writing-table always littered with papers and documents of every possible kind, and on which one could see photographs of the members of the Royal Family. There was also a miniature of the Princess Elisa Radziwill, who was the object of the first love of Prince William of Prussia at a time when he could not foresee his great destiny. On the walls were hanging a portrait of the Empress Charlotte of Russia, the favourite sister of the Emperor, and another one of his daughter, the Grand Duchess of Baden. A door, generally left half-open, led from this study into the bedroom of the Sovereign. Through it one could just see the narrow camp-bed upon which he breathed his last, with its thin mattress and the worn-out blankets which he always refused to have renewed.

The entrance to the study was through a small parlour where the aide-de-camp was on duty to introduce the visitors. This aide-de-camp was the only officer whom the Emperor permitted about his person. The aide came to the palace in the morning and remained until two o'clock, which was the hour when the monarch used to take his daily drive in the park of the Thiergarten, and during which William I. always refused other escort than his valet, who sat on the box beside the coachman. After the attempt made upon his life by Nobiling, however, he consented to take the aide-de-camp with him. During the fre-

quent visits of the Grand Duchess of Baden in Berlin, this aide-de-camp followed behind in another carriage, whilst the Emperor had his daughter sitting beside him.

On returning from his drive the Sovereign retired to his room, and either rested or worked until dinner, which was served at five o'clock in winter and at four in summer. The Empress was always present at dinner, as well as at breakfast, and it was the only moment in the day when she could talk freely with her husband, and when she communicated to him the newspaper articles to which she wanted to direct his attention. During this hour, too, she entertained him with the gossip of the town, and introduced the manifold intrigues with which she wanted to associate him.

The early evening was generally spent at the theatre or with a few chosen friends. And very often, when everybody was already asleep in the palace, one could see from the street the Emperor's lamp burning through the night and lighting up the last hours of his assiduous work.

CHAPTER III

RECEPTIONS AND CEREMONIES

IN the early days of the Empire there was little of pomp and splendour about ceremonial functions at the Court of Berlin. Sometimes they were almost amusing in their frank crudity. Nevertheless they were mostly enjoyable affairs. The receptions were particularly so, perhaps, because of their homely character.

These receptions varied in regard to the number of guests invited. The most select of these functions were the teas which were held nearly every day by the Empress, and to which hardly ever more than ten or twelve people were invited on any single occasion. They took place downstairs, in the apartments used by the Grand Duchess of Baden when she visited Berlin. The gatherings went by the name of "Bonbonnière," or "Tabatière," according to which of the rooms was used for the occasion. The guests were received by one of the ladies-in-waiting of the Empress—the Countess Adelaide Hacke or the Countess Louise Oriolla—by the maid of honour on duty, and by Count Nesselrode, Master of the Household of the Empress. After only a few minutes' waiting Her Majesty appeared, and at once sat down at a round table on which was a red velvet cover, with gold fringe. The people she

cared most particularly to entertain she invited to sit beside her, whilst the other guests took their places at other round tables, and as soon as all were comfortable tea was brought in.

Then the Emperor would enter, and his first words, full of his usual kindness, were to request those present not to get up. The Empress herself offered him tea, and during the course of the entertainment, which never lasted more than an hour or an hour and a half, one used to hand round sandwiches, ices, and very often roasted chestnuts with claret. The plates as well as the cups were ugly and common looking—white china with a green border going round them like a riband—the glass was baccarat and very pretty. The conversation was entirely small-talk, and the Empress led it the whole time, except in regard to the people sitting in the immediate neighbourhood of the Emperor. The events of the day were discussed, together with the gossip going round the town, of which the Empress was extremely fond, and reference was always made to the recent French publications, of which she kept herself regularly informed. These parties were held during the whole of the winter. Later I shall have something to say about the people who usually attended these teas.

The regular season began as a rule on January 18th, or rather on the nearest Sunday. The great event, which was celebrated with extreme pomp in the old Castle, was the feast of the different orders of the Prussian kingdom. It was preceded by a chapter of the Order of the Black Eagle, held for the purpose of receiving the new Knights elected during the year.

Then, on the Thursday following, the Great Court took place. This was the only occasion, except those of Royal weddings, when the ladies wore dresses with Court trains. The guests assembled at about half-past seven in the evening, each, according to his or her rank, going to one or other of the different halls of the old Castle. Upon that day one saw at Court faces and figures which only appeared there on this particular occasion, among others delegations of the principal merchants, the Burgomaster of Berlin, and a considerable number of deputies of the Reichstag, as well as of the Prussian Landtag, the plain evening clothes of whom stood out among the gold-laced and embroidered uniforms of the military and civil court functionaries.

The Emperor, holding the Empress by the hand, and followed by all the members of the Royal family, made his entry most solemnly at about eight o'clock. The Imperial party passed through the different rooms, and after having stopped for some minutes in the spacious picture gallery, where the officers of the garrisons of Berlin, Potsdam and Charlottenburg were assembled, entered the White Ball Room, where a concert took place. The royalties listened from a raised dais, whilst the guests sat facing them, on very hard chairs, in strict order of precedence. There was no supper, but at the close everybody was served with excellent hot punch.

In later years some slight change took place in these arrangements owing to the Empress's inability to walk. Instead of going round the various rooms talking to the people whom they knew, the Sovereigns

remained on the throne, the Emperor standing beside his consort, who kept her seat, while the guests filed past making low obeisance before them. This custom has been observed ever since.

The day after the Great Court a ball took place in the Opera House. It was a charity feast which was honoured by the presence of every member of the Royal family. The ball was opened by a polonaise led by the Court Marshal, Count Fritz von Perponcher, and the Countess Hacke, lady-in-waiting to the Empress. The Sovereigns then followed them through the room, which was beautifully ornamented with flowers and plants from the Royal hothouses of Potsdam. The boxes were all occupied by persons belonging either to the official society or to the financial world of Berlin. The whole effect was magnificent. The omnibus box on the left side was occupied by the members of the Royal family, whilst the two boxes facing it were reserved for the ambassadors and their wives, and for the Princes and Princesses belonging to those German families having the right to the title of Serene Highness. When the polonaise was over, the Emperor used to visit these two boxes, staying some time in familiar conversation with their occupants.

It was at these Opera Balls that the finest diamonds in the capital were worn by ladies of the highest nobility, or belonging to the commercial and industrial world. All the different coteries of which Berlin society was composed, used to assemble there, commingling for a few hours. And generally these festivities were much more amusing and pleasant because of this relaxation of the exclusiveness which at other times

prevailed. It must not be forgotten that at that period the line of distinction between people of differing ranks and social conditions was observed with a rigidity which to-day has vanished entirely. There existed then a strict line of demarcation between the people who were received at Court and those who could not aspire to such honour, and it was but seldom that one met an officer of a regiment of the Guards in houses where the hostess was not "Hoffähig." I remember very well that when I received an invitation to dinner from the banker, Baron von Bleichröder, my mother-in-law absolutely refused to allow me to accept it, and I was obliged to make some excuse or other to the Baroness, by which I quite expect she was not duped for a single moment.

The Great Court and the Opera Ball were followed by a series of balls given either in the old Castle or in the small palace used by the Emperor, and which now belongs to Prince Henry of Prussia. These last-mentioned receptions were very much sought after, not so much on account of the luxury displayed, for everything was most simply arranged, but because an invitation constituted a most rare distinction. The number of the invited guests seldom exceeded three or four hundred, and included only personal friends of the Sovereigns.

These balls began and ended very early, and were held in a capacious round room opening out of a splendid conservatory full of exquisite flowers. Supper was taken standing, and although most abundantly served, there was no display of luxury. The Emperor went among his guests as any ordinary host would do, and

showed that grace and kindness which always seemed to belong so specially to him, and to be manifest in everything that he said or did. He was always quite sure of his subject when conversing, and was most attentive towards the ladies present—especially if they were young and pretty.

William I. was ever a fervent admirer of womanly beauty, and he tried to please those who were so endowed. I must add that his assiduities to young women were of a most paternal character; he always took care to inquire as to whether they were enjoying themselves, whether they had found pleasant partners, or some other expression of solicitude for their comfort. Diplomats were not, as a rule, admitted to these small balls given in the Emperor's own Palace, except ambassadors and, in some rare cases, resident ministers; but whenever distinguished foreigners arrived in Berlin —such as, for instance, the Princess Hélène Kotchoubey, who became later on Mistress of the Robes to the Empress Marie Feodorovna of Russia, or the Duchess of Manchester, afterwards Duchess of Devonshire—they were always invited to these very select receptions.

The carnival generally ended by a grand ball given in the White Hall of the old Castle on the evening of Shrove Tuesday. The Empress was very strict on all points concerning the observance of Lent, and she used to end the entertainment punctually at midnight, after which it was not considered proper to dance again until Easter. It was only toward the close of my stay in Berlin that the rigidity of this custom began to be relaxed. I remember that a small dance given by Madame von Arnim Kröch-

lendorff, the sister of Prince Bismarck, in honour of her daughter, who had just made her debut into society, was talked of for weeks beforehand because it took place in the middle of Lent, much to the despair of the Catholics invited to it. They dared not take part in any of the dances for fear of offending the devout souls belonging to their community. It was the time of the Kulturkampf, and Roman Catholics rigorously observed the rules of their religion in the capital of Prussia, though it seemed to me they did so more for political reasons than for any other.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMPRESS'S THURSDAYS

WHEN the carnival season to which I referred in the previous chapter ended, the Empress began to give small, select receptions every Thursday in Lent, to which never more than two hundred and fifty people were invited. For the most part the same guests were invited week after week, changes only occasionally being made. Among those privileged to attend weekly were the ministers, the Serene Highnesses, and a few young women with whom the Emperor liked to surround himself. The ambassadors and their wives and the military attachés were invited every fortnight. These receptions took place in the small white drawing-room of the Palace, and on rare occasions in the round ball-room. The entertainment, although including good music, was boring to a degree, as the same artistes always appeared, and, usually, the same musical items were rendered. Among the artistes figured Madame Artôt de Padilla, whose fine voice did not succeed in effacing the impression produced by her huge size. Madame Artôt was a great favourite with the Empress, who declined to observe the advancing âge or the increasing *embonpoint* of the artiste, and regularly invited her each winter to sing at her receptions. They used to arrange the programme of

these concerts together, which fact accounted, perhaps, for their monotony, of which the good Augusta alone was not aware.

These Thursday evenings were considered very smart, but this did not prevent those privileged to attend them from complaining of their extraordinary dullness. They were very badly organised and arranged. As the guests entered the Palace each was immediately informed by a Chamberlain of the exact table at which they were to sit, and it was not permissible afterwards to leave one's place for the whole of the evening. If one chanced to have pleasant neighbours, things were not so bad, but if the contrary were the case, there was no possibility of evading the infliction. I remember that very often Princess Frederick Charles, the mother of the present Duchess of Connaught, who was a very great artist and possessed a most remarkable talent for drawing caricatures, used to make sketches of some of the guests on the back of her musical programme, adding some malicious touches to their bored expressions. The concert lasted something like two hours, interrupted by a short interval, during which the Sovereigns conversed with some of those present.

After the singing supper was served on the same tables around which the guests had sat the whole evening. Each table was covered with red velvet, and was decorated with a basket of the most lovely flowers. The servants would bring plates, knives and forks, with serviettes, but no damask was laid over the velvet tables. As for the bill-of-fare, it was invariably the same—some small patties, cold salmon

with mayonnaise sauce, chicken, and ices, and excellent claret and iced champagne. At about midnight or a little later the guests retired. The next Thursday exactly the same thing was again carried out with exactly the same guests in exactly the same way.

Sometimes, when Easter fell early in the year, these receptions continued for some weeks longer, but this occurred but seldom, because the Empress liked to go to Coblenz as soon as the spring began, and the Emperor, on his side, started for Wiesbaden to nurse his rheumatism, of which he liked to talk with a certain amount of martyred enjoyment. But he invariably returned to Berlin towards the end of May, to preside over the great manœuvres and the annual summer parade which took place about that time. During these weeks he often accepted invitations to dine with his personal friends, such as Count Schleinitz, who was then Minister of the Imperial Household, the old Duke de Sagan, the foreign ambassadors, and a few other people. William I. enormously enjoyed these festivities, the more so that he could then be free from the perpetual watching which the Empress exercised over him. It was also during these spring months that he gave military dinners from which ladies were excluded. In Potsdam, during the last days of June, the annual feast of the "Lehr Infanterie Bataillon" took place. It is colloquially referred to by the inhabitants of Berlin as the "Schrippen-Fest," after a particular kind of small loaves distributed to the soldiers on the occasion. This ceremony was followed by a gala performance

with the Crown Princess as hostess, in one of the halls of the New Palace of Potsdam, where the heir to the throne and his family dwelt during the summer. After this the Emperor went to Ems, and in August returned to the castle of Babelsberg, near Potsdam, where the Empress used to join him. At Babelsberg the Sovereigns received the few members of Court society kept in Berlin at that time of the year by their military or other functions. The kindness with which the Royal host and hostess welcomed these guests amply compensated for the annoyance of these invitations, which obliged the recipients to leave Berlin in full evening dress at midday by an ordinary train without even a reserved carriage for the Emperor's guests, because they dined in summer at four o'clock at the Imperial Court. At the Potsdam railway station carriages were waiting, but on arriving at the Castle there was no room in readiness where one could brush off the dust of the road, and ladies for the most part were obliged to take off their hats and put their hair in order without even the help of a looking-glass.

In September the Empress returned to Coblenz, whence she went to Baden-Baden to take the cure, and spend a few weeks with her daughter, the Grand Duchess Louise. She used to stay at the Hotel Messmer, where she occupied an extremely modest apartment. After the manœuvres the Emperor spent a short time at Baden, and returned to Berlin by the end of October; the Empress joined him much later. The Grand Duchess, at that period of the year, used to spend a few weeks with her father, for whom she

had the greatest affection. She was his favourite child, and he loved her, too, with an infinite tenderness. In the course of the autumn big shooting parties were given at the Imperial Court, and the Emperor also accepted shooting invitations at the country estates of a few great noblemen, such as Count Stolberg-Wernigerode, Prince Pless, the Duke de Sagan, and the Duke of Ratibor. In December the Empress returned to Berlin, where the winter season usually opened with a grand dinner to the foreign ambassadors accredited at their Court, and by another to which the principal members of the Imperial household were invited.

CHAPTER V

A DISAPPOINTED LIFE

I HAVE spoken of the personal characteristics of the Emperor William I.; it is now time perhaps to refer to the Empress. She must occupy an important place in any more or less conscientious chronicle of the reign of William I. The part she played in his life was considerable, though entirely different from the rôle she would have chosen for herself. The life of Augusta can be described in one word—disappointment. She was disappointed during the whole course of her royal career; but she was never disillusioned, because she neither realised her own imperfections nor succeeded in understanding that she alone was responsible for the numerous deceptions which she practised on herself. She was the first Empress of the new Empire, and this fact alone would have been sufficient to immortalise her name, and to give her a preponderant place in that Empire even if she had had no personal qualities of her own, which, indeed, was not the case.

The Empress Augusta possessed many real and great virtues, but unfortunately she never knew how to adapt herself to circumstances, and, as a result, her life was at the same time active and self-effacing, energetic and full of indecision, ridiculous and sublime

in the impulses of real and fervent charity, which always induced her to try to aid the numerous human miseries which she met on her path. What she needed most was tact, and her principal shortcoming was her false and exaggerated idea of what she considered to be her duty. Her lack of dignified simplicity harmed her immensely, and her efforts to surround herself with those who knew how to flatter her procured her a considerable number of enemies. As a mother she was admirable, and yet she never acquired any real influence over her children. As a wife she was a model of devotion, without, however, succeeding in living upon good terms with the Emperor. She tired him, just as she tired all those whom she allowed around her, by her affectation, her manner of speaking, her caprices, her desire to make her own opinions prevail over those of others, and by her intransigence. She mapped out for herself a line of conduct, and perhaps, because of the power she possessed to carry anything through at all costs, she forgot that although circumstances may arise which demand the abridgment of even the best-planned programme, it sometimes becomes impossible to draw back.

Augusta, in reality, was a conventional sovereign such as met with in those books which are specially written for the young; she was not a Queen who could touch the hearts of her subjects or inspire them to any unselfish devotion. She was never popular, and perhaps she did not seek to become so; crowds did not frighten her, but were repugnant to her instincts. She did good around her, simply from a

feeling of duty and of aristocratic pride, but without even trying to enter into the details of the misery or the sufferings which she hastened to relieve, simply because she thought it necessary, and not because it afforded her any pleasure or interest in her fellow creatures. She desired above everything else to play worthily her part as Empress and to safeguard her personal dignity. She remained faithful to that feeling all her life, and completely surrendered her whole being to her haughty principles. With an energy surprising in one so frail and ill, she insisted, as she was incapable of walking, on being carried to the old Castle the first time that the present Emperor, William II., entered it after his accession to the throne, in order that she should be the first to greet the new monarch. Although she was his grandmother, she considered herself nevertheless as his first subject.

Augusta's existence, as I have said already, was nothing but one long disappointment. Her youth was spent sadly at the little Court of Weimar, under the eyes of her mother, a Princess of a very cold and haughty character. Her mother was very proud of the fact that by birth she was a Russian Grand Duchess, and used to domineer over everyone wherever she went, and indeed in her own family circle she inspired more fear than affection. In spite of this she was extremely intelligent, a lover of literature, and admirably sustained the traditions of her family, which was so famous for its attachment to all intellectual matters, and particularly for its friendship for that great personality, Goethe. She would not admit any superiority above her own, nor allow familiarity on

the part of her children, whom she used to treat more as would a queen than a mother. The Princess Augusta had therefore a very solitary youth, and tried to forget her loneliness by study and reading. Her instruction as well as her education was conducted most carefully; the Grand Duchess of Weimar, who was very ambitious for her daughters, had desired to prepare them well for their future Imperial duties. The Empress used to tell her friends that she had been taught the art of polite conversation by being forced to talk to empty chairs, each of which was supposed to represent some great personage. Unfortunately this exercise appeared to have created the habit of treating living men like inanimate things, for she spoke so automatically to those who surrounded her that the impression was irresistibly conveyed that it was absolutely indifferent to her what kind of reply she received. Her expressions never went beyond certain phrases, always prepared beforehand, and this fact alone was sufficient to render any conversation with her embarrassing as well as difficult. She had no spontaneity either in her character; everything natural seemed absolutely unknown to her. Her whole deportment was studied and designed to impress those around her. Her life was a pose, and her intelligence seemed to be converged on one point only, that of never forgetting her privileges as an Empress. She gave one the impression that she would have made an inferior actress, but one who studied her parts thoroughly well.

Her nature was perhaps affectionate, certainly kind and compassionate, but she was neither sym-

pathetic nor obliging, and could only ask or refuse anything in a clumsy and awkward way. This awkwardness clung to her in every possible circumstance—in her family relations, in her married life, as well as in her public career. Though she considered herself an artist, she was not gifted with any real artistic feelings; her taste was deplorable, her literary knowledge, though certainly deep, did not go beyond a certain area, and she had not been able to shake off the influences of the eighteenth century, the spirit of which had presided over her education. She was fond of French authors, and liked to protect them in preference to German writers. Her favourite reading was that of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," some of the contributors to which—such as Maxime Du Camp, for instance—she had known personally at Baden-Baden. Her political tendencies were legitimist more than anything else, and if she showed great interest in Napoleon III. after the disasters of 1870, it was again more through affectation than through any feeling of friendship or of compassion. In this instance, as well as in all others, she desired, above everything else, to put herself forward in the light she considered to be the proper one.

The married life of the Empress brought her nothing but great deceptions. She had been very well aware of the affection which Prince William of Prussia had entertained for his cousin, the Princess Elisa Radziwill, and she had understood that his marriage with her had been nothing else but one of convenience, in which political expediency alone had been the agent. It is probable that this circumstance

filled her with a bitterness which left its impress deeply on her soul. She had nothing, or at least very little, in common with the husband who had been imposed upon her, and secretly she despised his military tastes. Even the birth of their two children did not bring the couple nearer to each other.

The Princess of Prussia fulfilled her motherly duties with the same rigid thoroughness which she put into all her other duties, but her efforts were not rewarded. Even in regard to her children the antagonism which divided her from the Prince made itself felt. The Princess of Prussia, as she was called at that time, wanted to prepare her son Frederick for his career as a future sovereign, and to help him to understand the duties which it entailed upon him, as well as to awaken his natural instincts of chivalry. The Prince of Prussia, on the contrary, clung to the old traditions of the Hohenzollerns, which did not admit sentiment of any kind, and still less a deep affection.

The result of this state of things was that the relations between mother and son were very intimate at first, especially before the marriage of the future Crown Prince, whilst those of the King with his heir never went beyond the limits of an affection, very respectful on the one side, and sometimes very impatient on the other.

CHAPTER VI

AN EMPRESS'S FOIBLES

UNTIL the day she ascended the Prussian throne the Empress Augusta led a very retired life. She did not care to be in Berlin, where she always felt in a false position because, although the mother of the future heir presumptive to the crown, she did not exercise any real influence. The reigning Queen, Elizabeth, had no great affection for her, and between her and her elder sister, the Princess Charles of Prussia, there existed a kind of worldly rivalry that tended to interfere with their relations to each other. Her haughty and intriguing nature seethed with impatience at the secondary part she found herself obliged to play. So patent was her position that many who were not well-disposed toward Augusta took occasion, whenever opportunity occurred, to taunt her upon this impotence which, naturally, made matters worse.

Her political opinions were essentially opposed to those of her husband, and the riots which had taken place in Berlin in 1848 had painfully impressed her. She could not forgive the Prince for having fled the capital, and she did not scruple to say so whenever she had opportunity.

She lived a life of her own in the royal castle of Coblenz, and in her actions a kind of tacit opposition

to the men then in power held a large place. In regard to her husband she frequently showed fits of impatience which did not make him inclined to seek consolation and encouragement at his own fireside. A deep gulf divided the couple very soon, and the numerous infidelities of the Prince, which had not been hidden from the knowledge of the Princess, had aggravated the sufferings endured by her vanity, and by her fiery nature, which always inclined her to exaggerate everything. Sometimes her agitation bordered on insanity. She was always restlessly active, and could not refrain from intrigue when she found nothing else to do; she was given, also, to pouring into any willing ear her catalogue of personal woes and feelings. These characteristics were exceedingly unfortunate, as her absence of tact made her take a multitude of wrong steps, in politics as well as in her private life. In this way she created many enemies.

The Empress was fully convinced of her own perfections and intelligence, and in making friends sought them among people who succeeded—an easy task—in persuading her that they shared her opinions and her way of looking at things. Unfortunately for her, there were very few among those so-called friends who were really attached to her. They generally made use of her, they frequently compromised her, but they could never give her good advice, because she had never been able to choose her friends among the right people, and never felt disposed to listen to any who were really competent to guide her footsteps.

Augusta entertained high ideas of her duties

as a sovereign, for which she had prepared herself for a considerable number of years. She had mapped out an entire programme of conduct from the day when she became Queen, and when that consummation arrived at last she did not attempt to hide from the public the satisfaction that the fact afforded her.

Concurrently with Augusta becoming Queen, her relations with the King considerably improved. He allowed her to exercise in a certain measure her devouring activity in the domain of charity, and the amount of useful institutions founded at the instigation of the Empress Augusta have remained to this day witnesses of an activity which she sustained during the whole course of her long life. Her subjects owe her much in that respect. The Augusta Stift in Charlottenburg is an institution which will always remind the German nation of the solicitude of that sovereign for the welfare of those women who are dependent upon their own exertions for their daily bread. Without her it is almost certain, too, that the Red Cross Society would never have been able to develop itself so rapidly as it did. Every attempt made to alleviate misery and privation or to work toward the accomplishment of some great social reform, found in her a steadfast protector.

During the war of 1866, and later on in 1870, the Queen considerably extended her efforts. The care which she took of the wounded, no matter what nationality they belonged to, deserves the highest praise. She was interested in everything that touched the welfare of the poorer classes, hospitals especially, and to her praise it must be said that she never

made the slightest distinction between Protestant charitable institutions or those of Catholic persuasion. Her religious tolerance was considerable, though her secret sympathies were more Catholic than otherwise, and it is quite certain that during the Kulturkampf she showed herself the most serious antagonist Bismarck had to fight. He never forgave her for her attitude in regard to that question.

When the German Empire was proclaimed at Versailles, the Empress was greatly concerned, and did not hide from the public her disapproval of all that was going on. In reality what had angered her more than anything else was that she had not been consulted on the matter; in fact, she only heard of the event when it was publicly announced. Perhaps her feelings had suffered as much as her self-conceit to find that the King had considered her so little in this important circumstance that he had not even tried to discuss it with her. Nevertheless, she entered quickly into her new position, and soon learned to appreciate fully the Imperial Crown which had been put upon her head so late in life. She became most punctilious in everything that concerned matters of etiquette, and used to spend a great deal of her time in formulating a new code of precedence, trying to revive the traditions of the old German Empire.

In this she was very different from the Emperor, who never thought of himself as anything else but King of Prussia, and who, until his death, remained more proud of this title than of being Emperor, for the reason that he held the former by the grace of God, and not, as the latter, by the good-will of some people

for whom, when all is said and done, he did not care in the least.

The proclamation of the Empire brought about a considerable change for the better in the relations between the royal couple. To speak the truth, subjects of discussion between them abounded just as much as formerly, and that of the dominating power which the events of 1870–1 awarded to Prince Bismarck added itself to the already long list. The Empress could not bear the Chancellor, who returned her aversion with interest. He despised her perpetual intrigues, and at the same time dreaded them, because he knew how painfully they affected the King. He was annoyed to find her always in his way, and to be obliged to treat with respect a person whose intelligence he so thoroughly disdained. He also felt angry with the Empress for the tenacity with which, whenever she wanted to get anything out of him, she importuned the Emperor, until he yielded to her out of absolute weariness.

The Chancellor, moreover, could not forgive Augusta for putting herself into open opposition with the policy for which he was responsible, and for indulging in childish conspiracies against him, together with certain of her circle, whose sympathies with France rendered them suspicious in his eyes.

As I have hinted, the Empress was not fortunate in her choice of friends; her most immediate entourage was composed of people of the most moderate intelligence, and who belonged to a circle that had few family traditions, and were considered petty and mean by the German aristocracy. These, however, were the only persons with whom she felt at ease, though she

treated them with characteristic disdain. She was always amiable with everybody, but her amiability was so thoroughly exaggerated, that one felt at once it contained in its manifestations no sincere cordiality or real sympathy. She liked, above everything else, to shower complimentary trivialities even upon those whom she disliked. In this, as in so many other things, she differed from her daughter-in-law, whose frank and open nature never left any one in doubt as to what were her feelings.

The Empress Augusta suffered, too, from a shade of smallness in her character; when she desired to express her displeasure, she did so by manifestations of apparent impoliteness that wounded people to the quick. Lacking, too, an independence of character, she often received persons whom she detested, but she treated them as badly as it was possible, whereas it would have been far more dignified had she frankly excluded them from her receptions.

She was never able to grant a favour with good grace, nor could she refuse anything with firmness; even her charity, though it was unbounded and immense, did not seem to proceed from her good heart; she used to spoil all her philanthropic demonstrations by a natural awkwardness, which never allowed her to smile when she was conferring a favour. And sometimes in life a smile or a word of encouragement produces more good, and wins more hearts, than thousands spent with ostentation, but without real warmth of soul.

It may seem a paradox that the greatest defect of this unfortunate sovereign, who lived and died un-

appreciated even by her nearest and dearest, consisted in a wrong and badly developed conception of her duties. In reality, however, it is not so, and whoever has known the Empress Augusta will at once understand what it is I mean.

She tried to apply everywhere, rightly or wrongly, the programme she had sketched out for herself. The numerous charitable deeds and institutions in which she interested herself remained empty of any elevating spirit, just as did the actions of her life; her intrigues were always second-rate, because she tried to hide them also under the mask of duty; she vigorously took up the Catholic cause during the Kulturkampf, because she imagined that by doing so she was fulfilling an obligation of charity first and of justice afterwards.

In her own way she constantly opposed Prince Bismarck, because she quite sincerely believed his conduct was of a nature to harm the monarchy at whose head stood her husband. This she thought was the motive which actuated her hostility, but the real reason was her personal antipathy to the Chancellor. In him she feared a rival in the influence which she wanted to wield over the Emperor, whom she did not love, but whom she aspired to govern, at least in what concerned the inner questions of their mutual existence.

She detested the Crown Princess, under the pretext that it was her duty because she did not find her sufficiently German in heart and manners. In doing so she utterly forgot that at times she herself was too entirely French in her sympathies to be able to bear with proper dignity the burden of the Imperial Crown

which the Franco-German war had placed upon her head.

She was never logical, seldom tactful, and did not recognise the ridicule she excited. At Court functions she used, until her widowhood, to dress in the lightest of colours, and to cover herself with artificial flowers, and never noticed the bad taste she displayed in adorning herself like a young girl. She had an unfortunate habit of always making gestures with her hands, giving thus an impression of a perpetual movement, that so thoroughly unnerved those with whom she was talking that they became quite fidgety, and kept wishing the conversation would come to an end.

I am not going here to talk about the political activity of the Empress Augusta, I am only speaking of her social influence, which was considerable, but did not add to the popularity of the reigning house. If the Emperor had not been always beside her, invariably kind, good, amiable and gracious, it is probable that the Berlin Court would not have been so brilliant as it was.

Yet, notwithstanding all I have said, it is only fair to admit that at root Augusta's instincts were higher, nobler, more artistic, more generous, and more unselfish than those of her Imperial Consort, but she succeeded only too well in obscuring these qualities by her self-deceptions and superficialities.

CHAPTER VII

PRINCE FREDERICK

WHEN, on my marriage, I came from St. Petersburg to my new home in Berlin the Crown Prince of Germany was forty-two years old. Disillusions and deceptions, from which he was to suffer later, had not yet broken him; that perpetual waiting for the Crown, in which his whole life was spent—for one can hardly take into account the three short months during which he occupied the throne—had not yet demoralised him. Popular not only with the army, but with the nation, he was familiarly called "Our Fritz"; and his brave conduct during the two difficult campaigns out of which Prussia had emerged transformed into an Empire, had won for him the admiration of even the most resolute adversaries that the monarchy possessed in Germany.

The Prince was respected; he inspired confidence; and many people placed in him their hopes for the future. At the time when I was married, no one supposed that the Emperor was going to live to the age of ninety-one and that his son's death would follow almost immediately upon his own. The Prince, therefore, was looked upon as the sovereign of the morrow, whose reign might begin at any moment; and, since at that time he was in the full strength of

EMPEROR FREDERICK III OF PRUSSIA.

his manhood, resplendent in health and life, people delighted to gather round and flatter him. Even his personal relations with his father, which at one time had been extremely strained, began materially to improve.

The years which followed the Franco-German War were perhaps the most peaceful and happy ones in the life of Frederick III. Later, many cares darkened his life and bereft him of hope and self-confidence, also of his faith in the possibility of doing the good about which his great soul had dreamed. But in 1873 he was still the Knight of Lohengrin, with a splendid physique and with a noble character, always ready to rush to the defence of those who were ill-treated or trodden upon, and to interest himself in every worthy cause.

I have often thought of him since those long-past days, and I like to do so in the light in which he appeared to me when, for the first time, I saw him in his white cuirassier uniform—the pattern of strength, vigour, and manhood, with whom it seemed impossible to associate any idea of illness, suffering, or death. Many years ago I committed to paper a word-portrait of him, and in re-reading the description it seems to me that it still gives apt expression of my opinion regarding the personality of the Emperor. I hope I shall be forgiven if I quote the words I used at that time. I do not think I could add anything to them to-day, and I think I judged Frederick III. and his father rightly when I said that their characters offered many points of resemblance.

"The one as well as the other was always willing

and ready to sacrifice his own person to the welfare of the State—with one essential difference, however, for whilst the old Emperor was always conscious of the dignity of the Crown, his son thought more about that of its wearer. Brought up in different times, the Crown Prince was all his life more or less under the impression of the humiliation which the events of 1848 had made upon his youthful mind. He had grown up under it, just as his father had entered life under the more terrible shadow of Jena and the disasters through which Prussia had seen its very existence threatened. An abyss lay between the two men: the abyss which separates the sacred rights of kings from those of a sovereign people. William I. had seen the foot of the Corsican adventurer pressed down heavily upon his nation and his dynasty; he remembered the tears of his mother, and all those dark days when the Queen of Prussia wept in a mean little room at Memel. Frederick III. had witnessed the invasion of the palace of his fathers by the mob, and its triumph in the streets of the capital. He grew up with the image of Lassalle before his eyes, whilst his father had had that of the great Napoleon.

"This explains the difference between the two men, and their respective characters. In his father's days no differences divided fathers from their sons; they had one common object in view: the defeat of the man in whom they saw the enemy of all that they held dear. It was not a question of taking another generation's place, but the far, far more important one of winning back the place in which an usurper had boldly installed himself. Both young and old found

themselves united in a common cause against a common foe.

"With Frederick III. things were very different. Born with a critical turn of mind and a most generous disposition, he was by nature the sort of man who would embrace any new idea if he thought it could be conducive to his neighbour's good. Brought up in Liberal opinions by his mother, profoundly imbued with a sense of obligation towards humanity in general, his greatest mistake, if mistake it can be called, was to put humanity before individualities and nationalities.

"He was not obstinate, and yet there was in him a good deal of that perseverance in opinions which has always been one of the characteristics of the Hohenzollerns. Devoted to his wife, and influenced by his father-in-law, the late Prince Consort, he had taken him for his model, forgetting that the position of a German Prince Consort in constitutional England could not be compared to that of the legitimate sovereign of Prussia. He did not realise that the great respect which Prince Albert displayed, and with which he tried to imbue Queen Victoria, for constitutional government, might have its source in the fact that British public opinion would never have forgiven him had he ever forgotten it. Wisdom is often a matter of necessity; it is certain that at the time of the famous struggle between the old Emperor and his son, in the early days of the reign of William I., he was right, and the Crown Prince was wrong in fact, however much he might have been justified in theory. This struggle unfortunately created a bitterness be-

tween the two men, which even the glorious events that led to the restoration of the Empire did not succeed in effacing.

"It would have been difficult to find a more loving personality than that of Frederick III.; he was everything that is noble, everything that is good; to be near him was to get away from the pettiness, the fret, the evil, the injustices of so-called society. His mind was noble, his nature was true, his heart was kind. He had known disappointment and sorrow, had measured the ingratitude of mankind, had been confronted by some of the most serious problems of life, and had never failed in any of his duties. His was an heroic existence—as heroic as was his death. He had but few faults, and these were mostly of a kind which would have been called qualities in anyone else. A dutiful son, an admirable husband and father, a faithful friend, a good man, there is no doubt that he would have made an excellent sovereign.

"His political qualifications have been discussed. It is certain that he had not the proud conviction of the nobility of his mission which distinguished his father, nor the brilliancy which characterises his son, but he had a natural uprightness and a sound common sense which would have carried him through any difficulty, public or private. Schooled into submission to circumstances by long years of weary waiting for a Crown which ultimately was only to be his for three months, and grateful by nature, it is certain he would never have dismissed Prince Bismarck, nor have attempted to rule in defiance of public opinion, as his impetuous son has so often done. He would have

put his vast experience of public affairs at the service not only of his country, but of the world in general.

" His life was in some respects a painful one. It is certain that at no time, even when he exercised his Regency, did he wield great influence on public affairs; he was always suspected by his father, and made use of by Bismarck when the latter found himself in want of support against some opinion of the old Emperor's.

" The diary of the Crown Prince during the Franco-German War, compared with the memoirs of Prince Bismarck, throws a curious light upon the use that was made of the former by the real master of the German Empire, one of whose greatest talents was the ability to discover the peculiarities of other people and to turn them to the profit of his own schemes. Thus, during the long negotiations which preceded the memorable day when the old palace of the kings of France was the scene of the greatest triumph of their immemorial enemies, had it not been for the Crown Prince, it is doubtful whether the proclamation of the Empire could have taken place so easily as it did at last. In this eventful circumstance Frederick III. showed himself a wiser statesman than his father, perhaps because he had at the same time fewer prejudices.

" And yet he was, if possible, more imbued than his father with a sense of the inferiority of all the other German princes in comparison with his own race. To illustrate my meaning I will relate a curious conversation I had with the then Crown Prince after the tragic death of King Ludwig of Bavaria.

" We met at the wedding breakfast of the Countess

Schleinitz, one of the greatest friends of the Crown Princess, who had become the wife of the late Austrian Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Count Volkenstein. During the meal I was sitting next to the Prince, who had that very same morning returned from Munich, where he had represented his father at the funeral of the unfortunate king. Of course, the latter's mysterious end was the subject of all conversations and, naturally enough, it formed part of ours. I had myself returned that same day from Paris, where I had been on a visit to my aunts; and the Crown Prince asked me what was the impression produced in the French capital by the event.

"The conversation then drifted into another channel, and touched upon the foundation of the German Empire, when the heir to the throne, in recapitulating the different facts which had made this restoration possible, spoke of what in his opinion ought to be the feelings of German princes towards the new organisation which they had helped to build. He then used these remarkable words, speaking in French: '*Les princes allemands devraient toujours se souvenir qu'ils ne sont que les pairs de l'Empire—p-a-i-r-s—vous me comprenez?*' ('The German princes should always remember that they are only the peers of the Empire—p-e-e-r-s—you understand me?'); and he spelled the word slowly, just as I have written it. The key to the character of Frederick III. may be found in this remark.

"I have said that he was at heart a Liberal, and that he had the most sincere respect for constitutional government. Indeed, he carried this respect almost

too far—too far, at least, for the heir to a throne whose principles were so essentially different from those which have helped to make the grandeur of the English monarchy.

"In that sense he was, perhaps, too much under the influence of his wife; though, on the other hand, the Princess would have been decidedly more popular if she had not yielded as much as she did to certain opinions of her husband. In many cases the Princess was, I think, credited with influencing her husband, when it was not true, as in one memorable instance, that of the execution of the would-be assassin of the old Emperor, young Hödel. At that time (the law has been modified since that day) it was imperative for the King of Prussia to sign personally every death warrant. William I. hated so much this part of his duties that no capital execution had ever taken place during his reign

"When he was fired upon by Hödel he declared at once his intention of pardoning the unfortunate wretch. But then took place the second, Nobiling's, attempt, in which the aged monarch nearly lost his life. Whilst he lay on his sick-bed, Hödel was tried, and of course sentenced to death. The Crown Prince was Regent. It was impossible for him to show himself merciful, especially in view of all that had been said regarding his relations with his father; but though he never hesitated one moment to do what his duty required of him, his repugnance to the application of the death penalty was so profound that he allowed the public to learn something of it. Indeed, he went so far as to tell the British Ambassador, Lord Ampthill,

who, with his wife, was among his greatest friends, that he had never felt more unhappy than on the day when, by a stroke of his pen, he had sent a human creature into eternity.

"The Crown Princess, though quite as kind as her husband, did not entirely share his opinions on that delicate point, as I happen to know. If she sought to influence him at all it would have been to overcome his scruples, but she did not do so, and remained perfectly neutral; but, as people in Berlin always blamed her for everything that they did not like in the Crown Prince, she was made responsible for the hesitation, if it could be called by that name, which he had displayed when confronted by one of the painful duties of his high position."

I hope the reader will forgive me for this long quotation. Perhaps it is the desire not to reawaken bitter memories that has tempted me to use it. Perhaps, also, it is the feeling that nothing I could say now would be able to render him so well the justice he deserves as the words I wrote when all these things were fresh in my mind, undistorted by the glamour or the dimness of time. Perhaps if I tried to speak about Frederick III. to-day I should do so with less reticence, and less justice in regard to certain people who were connected with the sad events that preceded his end, and this might not be quite fair, because I was not in Berlin at the time of his last illness and death, so could only speak about it from hearsay.

In these circumstances it seems to me that I ought to abstain from relating what I have heard concerning that most pitiable subject and the differences which

arose between the Empress Victoria and her eldest son, the present Monarch. Unfortunately it is certain that misunderstandings arose between them, which, as usual in the like occasions, were rendered unnecessarily acrid by the interference of third parties. It is also certain that painful scenes followed upon the passing away of the unfortunate sovereign, but I do not think it wise to bring back to public remembrance events which ought to be forgotten, and actions which are certainly to-day the object of regret to those who were led into performing them. I prefer trying to call back to my mind the affectionate welcome which I invariably received from the Emperor Frederick, and his soft, ever indulgent voice, which still rings in my ear as I am re-reading his last message, a few words written in pencil not many days before he passed away, and which he handed over for me to my husband, who had been admitted to see and say a last good-bye to him.

I was in Russia at the time, near my father, who also died that same summer. I was therefore prevented from seeing Frederick III. Perhaps it was for the best. It would have been too cruel to look at him broken down by his terrible illness and worn to a shadow.

CHAPTER VIII

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

DURING the reign of the Emperor William I. the Prussian Royal Family was less numerous than it is now.

The Emperor had had two younger brothers, of whom only one, Prince Charles, was alive when I arrived in Berlin. He was a pleasant, amiable old man, just as fascinating, if one can use such a term, as was the Emperor himself. He represented a perfect type of a *grand seigneur* of the eighteenth century, and his manner with women was the most chivalrous possible, with just enough reticence to allow them to understand that had it not been for the differences in social condition, and also in years, he would have hastened to fall at their feet. Everyone liked him, and the receptions he used to give in his palace of the Wilhelms Platz were very popular, especially one that used to take place every year on the 3rd of February, the birthday of the Princess Charles, when in a series of living pictures figured the prettiest women of the Berlin court and society.

The Princess Charles, Princess Marie of Saxe-Weimar by birth, was the eldest sister of the Empress Augusta, but quite different from her in manner as well as in character, though she shared in a certain measure the

affectation of the latter. She was far more sympathetic than her sister, and if she had not followed the example of the Empress in persisting in the desire to appear younger than she really was, and in dressing herself accordingly, she would have been quite charming. Unlike the Empress, Princess Charles sedulously avoided intrigue; she was, moreover, eminently tactful.

The sisters were not supposed to be unusually fond of each other; indeed, people used to say that the Princess Charles did not like having to yield precedence to her younger sister, and that she secretly coveted the Imperial Crown that adorned the latter's brow. Be this as it may, it was necessary to be a very close observer to discern that the two ladies were not inordinately devoted to each other.

The Princess Charles exercised an influence over Berlin society until her death. Her household was organised on luxurious lines, and the dinners she gave were famous for their elegance and the excellence of the cooking. But when she died in the beginning of the year 1877 the Prince shut up his house and never appeared again in society, except at the official assemblies which he had to attend. He died suddenly, at the very moment when festivities were being prepared for the celebration of the silver wedding of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, and his demise caused much perturbation in Berlin society, which had been eager to present its congratulations to the heir to the throne and to his consort—and to show the smart frocks it had ordered for the occasion.

This caused the mourning for poor Prince Charles to be curtailed as much as possible, and his funeral

was hastened with almost unseemly speed. Even the horses that dragged his coffin to Potsdam, where he was buried, appeared to share the general desire to get the thing over as quickly as possible.

I remember having dined on the evening he was taken away from Berlin at the house of friends living at the corner of the Linden and Wilhelmstrasse. As we were drinking coffee after the meal a servant came to tell us that the funeral procession of the Prince was passing under the windows. We went to have a look at it, and nothing could be sadder than the sight of that coffin, carried away by horses at full speed, surrounded by valets carrying lighted tapers, and escorted only by a feeble detachment of troops, without one single friend or relation accompanying it.

Prince and Princess Charles's only child was the famous Red Prince, Frederick Charles, who distinguished himself at Metz and on many other battlefields. He had never succeeded in making himself liked by anyone, being possessed of abrupt and even brutal manners; but he was a clever man—clever enough never to allow anyone to guess that he had brains. One did not meet him often in society, and whenever he put in an appearance at some official reception it was always under protest, as he cared for no company other than that of a few officers whose tastes for hunting, shooting, and drinking harmonised with his own.

Prince Frederick Charles had never been able to get on with his wife, a Princess of Anhalt Dessau. Yet the Princess was one of the loveliest women of her generation, and possessed a remarkable talent both

for music and for painting. She had a great affection for young girls, and used to advise them with the greatest solicitude when first they entered society, as I had the opportunity to experience personally. I shall always remain grateful to her for the indulgence and sympathy with which she honoured me, and shall never forget her good advice to me on more than one occasion.

Unfortunately she was almost completely deaf, which caused her to show extreme timidity and embarrassment whenever she found herself in company; but when she was alone with you, and not disturbed by the noise of many conversations around her, she became quite charming, and really witty.

She had had one son and three daughters, the two eldest of whom were extremely pretty. They both died when still quite young. The eldest, Princess Mary, who had been married to old Prince Henry of the Netherlands, was united after his death to Prince Albert of Saxe-Altenburg, and succumbed in childbirth two years later; whilst the Princess Elizabeth, the wife of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Oldenburg, was also carried away after a short illness, at the flower of her age, leaving an only child, a girl, the Princess Sophy Charlotte, who is the wife of the second son of the Emperor William. The only surviving daughter of the Princess Frederick Charles of Prussia is the present Duchess of Connaught.

The second brother of the Emperor William, Prince Albert of Prussia, died before I reached Berlin. He had married the Princess Marianne of the Netherlands, from whom he had obtained a divorce, and

had afterwards married a lady not belonging to any royal or princely house—Mdlle. de Rauch, who later on received the title of Countess Hohenau. The two sons to whom she gave birth were at one time very popular in Berlin society. The eldest was the victim of a sad scandal, which is not yet forgotten, and in which perished his honour as well as his reputation.

By his first wife Prince Albert had a son, who for a good many years prior to his death was Regent of the Duchy of Brunswick, and who used to come very often to Berlin. He was a very handsome man, and that is about all that I can say concerning him. The only daughter of Prince Albert married a Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwérin, but their union proved most unhappy.

When I knew her, the Princess Alexandrina was already separated from her husband, and was residing alone in the castle of Bellevue in the Thiergarten, where the Emperor had put an apartment at her disposal. She was seen but seldom in society, and lived a solitary existence, devoting her life entirely to the education of her only child, the Princess Charlotte, who was later to marry one of the handsomest men in Berlin, Prince Henry XVIII. of Reuss.

There were also in Berlin at the time two old cousins of the Emperor, Prince George and Prince Alexander of Prussia. The former was a misanthrope, with just a shade of eccentricity; one rarely met him anywhere. The latter, on the contrary, though none too intelligent, was extremely fond of society, feminine society in particular. I remember that one day, at my mother-in-law's house, he managed to decoy into an empty

room a certain Madame von Wildenbruch, the wife of an illegitimate son of Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, and began kissing her with fervour, to the extreme stupefaction and anger of the lady in question, who, it must be added, was at that time nearly seventy years of age.

Another personage in Berlin at this time deserving of mention was Prince August of Würtemberg, the brother of the Grand Duchess Helen of Russia. He was in command of the Imperial Guards, and treated by the Royal Family with great respect. Physically, he reminded one of the Emperor, whilst the manners and conversation of the two men bore a close resemblance. Everybody liked Prince August, and his amiability was quite proverbial.

Then there was Prince Frederick of Hohenzollern, the youngest brother of the late King of Roumania, who after having led for a considerable number of years the life of a very gay bachelor, had at last married the charming Princess Louise of Thurn and Taxis, the niece of the Empress Elisabeth of Austria.

When this marriage took place the Empress Augusta for once showed herself prudent, and, not wishing the Princess to move in the society in which Prince Frederick mixed, announced that she should take status as a Prussian Princess, and return the calls only of those ladies of Berlin society whose rank gave them the right to this distinction.

The indignation of the others, who had been accustomed to treat the Prince of Hohenzollern just as any other person, knew no bounds, and a strong current of hostility established itself against the Princess Louise.

She, however, was charming, pretty, gracious, and kind, and was careful not to show how embittered her life had become. She withdrew from society more than was necessary, and tried to efface herself as much as possible. I have often pitied her, because I liked her very much, used to see her frequently, and admired her enormously.

She was one of the most sympathetic women it has ever been my fortune to meet, very intelligent, and most kind-hearted, able also to bear with dignity misfortunes that must have weighed heavily on her mind. She is a widow now, and lives in Munich. But she left Berlin during her husband's lifetime, for Prince Frederick having had a serious quarrel—I forget the circumstances—with the present Emperor, resigned his military command, and fixed his residence in Bavaria.

During the fourteen years which I spent in Berlin I saw all the children of the Crown Prince and Princess, who were more or less in the nursery when I first knew them, grow to maturity. The Princess Charlotte was married at sixteen to Prince Bernard of Saxe-Meiningen, and soon became one of the loveliest and most elegant women in the capital. Prince Henry became a sailor, and was not often seen at Court, but his eldest brother, the present German Emperor, was beginning already to be known when I left Berlin, and to have both friends and enemies in society.

I have never met William II. since his accession to the throne, but I have kept a very bright remembrance of his personality, such as it appeared at the period

about which I am writing. It was even then impossible not to be struck by his remarkable intelligence. And in addition, he was a most attractive man, and possessed the great gift—one of the most precious that Nature can bestow—of personal magnetism. Despite the gravity and seriousness which he affected, there was in him an impetuosity which was most difficult to resist. In spite of the buoyancy of his youth his judgments showed a remarkable maturity. He had no illusions, nor was there any cynicism at this time, at any rate, in his nature.

Prince William was very fond of society and of all the enjoyments which it offered; but it must be noticed here that from the moment he ascended the throne his conduct became irreproachable.

The Princess spent the first years of her marriage in an almost constant state of delicate health. But she had the good sense never to lend an ear to all the gossip that went about town concerning the Prince. She was very happy in her home, and content to live on affectionate terms with her husband. Later on, when the Princess William became Empress, she continued to show the tact which was, and indeed is, one of her foremost qualities.

Apart from the members of the Royal Family, one could meet in Berlin on certain occasions most of the German Sovereigns and members of German reigning houses. The Grand Duchess Louise of Baden, the daughter of William I., spent many weeks there every year, living in the Imperial palace, and hardly ever leaving her father, who cherished her with a particular tenderness. She was a truly charming princess, and

her presence always brought life and merriment into the serious and morose Court circle. She smoothed down, thanks to her perfect tact, the differences which, alas! arose but too frequently between the Emperor and the Empress, and she knew how to manage the extreme nervousness and irritability of her mother.

The Dowager Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the sister of William I., also visited her brother two or three times a year. She had kept, notwithstanding her advanced age, traces of her former great beauty, and it was related that she bore a great likeness to her eldest sister, the Empress Charlotte of Russia, the consort of Nicolas I.

The Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar also came to see his sisters from time to time. He was without exception one of the dullest people I have ever met, and he was the terror of all those with whom he engaged in conversation. I remember that one day when the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII., was in Berlin, accompanied by his eldest son, the late Duke of Clarence, I happened to be sitting next to the young Prince during supper at a party given by Count Radolinski, now Prince Radolin. Opposite to us sat the Grand Duke of Weimar, who kept talking with his immediate neighbour and making such senseless remarks that at last we burst out into fits of uncontrollable laughter, which got still worse when the object of our merriment asked us what had given rise to it.

The Duke of Clarence gravely turned towards me and said quite loudly, "His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Weimar would like to know why we are laughing so much."

Happily for me the Crown Princess, who sat at a table next to ours, got up at that moment, and I was able to avoid making a reply. But I have never been able to forget that evening when, with all the carelessness of my twenty years, I made fun in his very presence of such an august personage as the brother of the Empress Augusta.

The latter, had she only known it, would never have forgiven me, and still less the Radziwill family, for whom every member of a royal house was almost a god.

CHAPTER IX

THE ENTOURAGE OF THE SOVEREIGNS

THE Emperor William and the Empress liked to surround themselves with their friends and to see them constantly. This small circle, which was most exclusive, assembled nearly every day, and at these meetings Augusta found it possible to satisfy that love for gossip which never left her.

The Imperial Court was very numerous, but its most important functionaries, though always treated with great honour, seldom saw the Sovereigns except on official occasions. The Emperor had six aides-de-camp, each of whom were on duty two days in succession. He kept them in attendance on him as long as possible, for he hated changes, especially towards the end of his life.

Two great favourites, Prince Anthony Radziwill and Count Lehndorff, kept their posts of aides-de-camp until the demise of the Emperor, though they were already old generals, who ought to have retired from their military life long before. Then there was also old Count Goltz, a charming man, amiable and attentive towards ladies, whose character was a model of straightforwardness. He was deeply attached to William I., who always treated him as one of his best friends.

Ladies Near the Throne

The Empress had two ladies-in-waiting—*dames du palais*, as they were called: the Countess Adelaide Hacke and the Countess Louise Oriolla. The Empress was very fond of the former, but could barely tolerate the latter, who, according to the scandalous chronicle of Berlin, had been honoured with the affections of the old King. The Countess Hacke was deformed, but possessed all the wit which is generally attributed to those whom Nature has disfigured. She hardly ever left her Imperial mistress, and was supposed to have a considerable influence over her. Many people hated her; but I personally never had any ground for disliking her; and I know, through several people — among them one of my greatest friends, Count de St. Vallier, who was on very good terms with her—that she was capable of doing an infinity of good, and that she was very loyal to those she liked.

The Countess Oriolla, when I first met her, was a complete physical wreck. It was impossible to find the slightest signs of the beauty for which she had been famous in her youth and which had won her so many admirers in the past. But she was very distinguished in her manners, and her bearing was that of the very great lady she had been born and had remained. She held a prominent position in Berlin, which no one attempted to dispute. The Emperor was always most attentive to her, and when he was alone in the capital during the absences of the Empress at Baden or Coblenz, he used to spend his evenings with her.

The Countess went a great deal into society, and she was the soul of a little circle which generally met together in the house of the old Princess Biron of

Curland, a Russian by birth, who had the manners of an eighteenth century sovereign, and who for more than half a century exercised a regal sway over Berlin society—a power of which no one attempted to deprive her.

Besides her two ladies-in-waiting the Empress had a mistress of the robes, two or three maids of honour, a master of the household (specially attached to her person), and a secretary. The mistress of the robes was the Countess Perponcher, an excellent and most worthy person, kind and amiable—a model of what a great lady ought to be. One could not help liking her, despite the frequent receptions which she used to give, which were considered, not without reason, to be appallingly dull.

The maids of honour were changed sometimes, either when they married or when they could no longer bear the extreme fatigue which their position entailed upon them. The one who remained the longest time at this post was the Countess Alexandra von Brandenburg, who was related to the Prussian Royal Family, and who was greatly respected by the Emperor, as well as the Empress. Her two brothers were also for a good many years attached to the person of William I.

Count Nesselrode was at the head of the household of the Empress. He was an insignificant little man whose chief qualities were his honesty, his gentlemanliness, and his devotion to the person of his sovereign lady. He was also a perfect man of the world, and, so far as I know, never aspired to become anything else.

As for the secretary, Baron von Knesebeck, he

constituted a great exception among the not over-refined society of the Prussian capital. He was a witty little man, full of fun, and with a real taste for art, literature, and music. He knew everybody, and everything that was going on in society, but never indulged in gossip. He became the secretary to the present Empress after the death of Augusta, and remained in that position until his death.

This small circle of privileged people, who constituted the intimate friends of the Empress, used generally to meet at the Palace in the evening, at the very small reception of the "Tabatière" or "Bonbonnière" which I have already described.

When the Duke and the Duchess de Sagan were in Berlin they were invited almost daily. The Duke was the son of the celebrated Duchess de Dino, whose frailties have become legendary. He was a charming, amiable little old man, always well shaved and well dressed, with a flower in his buttonhole and the manners of a great nobleman, not of the eighteenth century, but of the French Restoration. He was a delightful companion, an accomplished man of the world, who only lived for the world and for his position at Court, which was, as a matter of fact, the only place where he found himself in his right element.

It was a necessity of his existence to pay calls, to spend his time going from one drawing-room to another, and to flit here and there, leaving behind him the remembrance of the pretty, soft phrases he had uttered, and a faint perfume of *poudre à la maréchale.* His conversation was just as entertaining as it was superficial, and one was always glad to spend an hour in

his company, if only on account of the certainty one had that he would never say anything ill-natured. When he died at a very advanced age a whole epoch disappeared with him, and even those who scarcely knew him regretted him, because he was the last representative of a type that will never be met with again.

The Duke de Sagan was married to the Countess Pauline Hatzfeld, the daughter of Marshal de Castellane and the sister of the too famous Countess de Beaulaincourt, whose adventures have furnished such abundant food for criticism to all the historians of the Third Empire. Madame de Sagan was very different from her husband and as clever as the Duke was insignificant. She had sharp manners and a still sharper tongue, but her conversation was sparkling with wit, and her remarks as amusing as they were cutting. She was sometimes ill-natured, but so seldom that one could easily forgive her, especially as she expressed her opinions and judgments so funnily that no one could get angry at them. She was a great sportswoman, and was never so happy as when she was walking, gun in hand, in the woods that surrounded her princely domain of Sagan.

In addition to the Duke and Duchess de Sagan one often saw at the small receptions of the Empress, Count William Pourtalès, whose son became German Ambassador at St. Petersburg. He was an ex-Lovelace, and had a very shrewd and observant mind, and generally succeeded, therefore, in bringing some animation into even these most dull parties.

Among others who attended these intimate gatherings were Field-Marshal Count Moltke, that great and

mute genius; Count and Countess Redern, the latter a Princess Odescalchi by birth, and a charming old lady; and nearly all the members of the Radziwill family, who enjoyed quite a privileged position at Court so long as William I. lived and reigned. One also saw sometimes the Duke and Duchess of Ratibor, both of whom now are dead; and the Hohenlohes, whenever a member of that family was in Berlin.

Prince Bismarck never appeared at these receptions, nor did the people who were on good terms with him, because the Empress was at daggers drawn, not only with the Chancellor personally, but also with all those who prided themselves upon being considered his friends. There were seldom any other people than those whose names I have mentioned at these small receptions which Augusta used to hold almost daily in her palace. She enjoyed their society, and felt at her ease among them, knowing that she could, in their presence allow herself a freedom in her conversations which would have been impossible before persons on whose discretion she could not have relied.

CHAPTER X

COURT FESTIVITIES IN BERLIN

SEVERAL important social events took place in Berlin during the thirteen years I lived there. And as time went on, and the Empire became less aggressive, court ceremonies became more and more imposing.

The birthdays of the Emperor, which were at first celebrated by small family parties, grew to be considered as national festivals, and the other German sovereigns and members of the Royal and princely houses made a point of coming personally to Berlin to present their good wishes to the aged Emperor. The Empress Augusta, who was never happier than when arranging State functions, succeeded in persuading her Consort that the evening party, which was generally given on his birthday in the private palace which he had built for himself as Prince of Prussia, had better take place in the old castle. William I. allowed the Empress to do what she liked, though I think that he regretted the old times when he was comparatively free from pomp and show.

It was in the old castle, too, that were solemnised the first Royal marriages at which I was ever present: that of the Princess Charlotte, eldest daughter of the Crown Prince and Princess, with the hereditary Prince

of Saxe-Meiningen, and of the Princess Elizabeth of Prussia, second daughter of Prince and Princess Frederick Charles, with the heir to the Duchy of Oldenburg. These two weddings, which took place on the same day, had given rise to much talk and gossip, and society had been wondering whether the old etiquette usually observed on such occasions would be followed.

In order to explain this excitement, I must mention that one of the features in Prussian Royal marriages was always a kind of polonaise danced after the religious ceremony by the bride and bridegroom with every single member of their family, and with the guests of high standing, and during which all the Ministers walked before them, each carrying a lighted taper in his hand. The great question was whether Prince Bismarck would consent to lend himself to the old custom, and to perform this duty of his office. But the Chancellor had any amount of excuses at his disposal, and a few days before the one appointed for the double ceremony the papers announced that owing to a severe attack of neuralgia he had left Berlin for Friedrichsruhe on a short leave.

These marriages were the first celebrated since the kingdom of Frederick the Great had been transformed into an Empire, and brought an enormous number of guests to Berlin. First and foremost among them were the King and Queen of the Belgians, who—for a wonder, as they were not much given to going about together—arrived by the same train, and condescended for once to play the part of Darby and Joan. The Queen, an Austrian Archduchess, had acquired

the reputation of being an eccentric woman, caring more for her horses and dogs than for her family. However, on this occasion she evidently desired to prove herself pleasant, because anyone more gracious than she was would have been difficult to find. She allowed all the principal ladies of the society of Berlin to be introduced to her, and the Empress took upon herself the task of walking round the room with her and drawing her attention to the people she wanted her to notice. The King looked intensely bored, and it was easy to see that he wished himself anywhere but where he was. So far as I can remember, this was the solitary occasion when the Belgian sovereigns ever paid a visit to the German Court.

The Prince of Wales, of course, arrived for his niece's wedding, and many of the German princes and princesses were present, not excepting the Weimar family.

I have spoken already of the Grand Duke. As for the Grand Duchess, she was very different from her husband, and, though extremely ugly, was a most imposing Princess. She was clever, too, and upheld the reputation of the Weimar family. She was a Princess of the Netherlands by birth, a daughter of that Queen Anna Pavlovna who was considered to have been the cleverest among all the clever daughters of the Emperor Paul of Russia; and she kept and maintained at her court the traditions in which she had been reared. Notwithstanding her want of beauty, moreover, she presented a splendid figure, being always magnificently dressed and covered with wonderful jewels, among which shone a parure of rubies and diamonds that were supposed to be the finest of their kind in Europe.

The Mecklenburgs

The Mecklenburg family also mustered in full force for these weddings. The Dowager Grand Duchess Alexandrine was always glad of an opportunity to visit Berlin and her brother the Emperor; she looked upon these sojourns in the German capital as her holidays. With her came her son, the Grand Duke, and his children, and the Mecklenburg-Strelitzes, and many minor German Princes, eager to be present at what was considered the most important gathering of crowned heads that had taken place for a long time. The Empress Augusta felt in her element, and none was more glad than she to be able to entertain so many illustrious guests.

The wedding took place at the uncommonly inconvenient time of six o'clock in the afternoon, and the company assembled a good half-hour earlier in the chapel of the old castle, where it was difficult to find places. After a considerable wait the procession, heralded by chamberlains and masters of the ceremonies in their gold-laced uniforms, appeared in sight. The two bridal couples led it hand in hand, the Prince of Meiningen with Princess Charlotte, preceding the heir to the Oldenburg Duchy with the Princess Elizabeth. The latter looked quite lovely, and the diamond crown that each Princess of Prussia wears on her wedding day suited her dark and exquisite beauty to perfection.

The Princess Charlotte did not show to such advantage. Small of stature, and rather plump, she had not yet reached her womanly development, and looked more like a child than a bride—she was scarcely seventeen. Her dress was too heavy for her, and she

had too much orange blossom and more ornaments than suited her. Moreover, her eyes were red and her cheeks flushed. It would have been difficult then to imagine she would ever be the beautiful woman she became later.

Immediately behind the two bridal pairs walked the Emperor, with the Queen of the Belgians on his arm, and the Empress leaning on that of King Leopold. The other Princes and Princesses followed, and all eyes turned on the Crown Princess when she appeared, together with the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, in a court train bordered with ermine, and exquisite diamonds adorning her head and neck. She looked almost more agitated than her daughter, but kept bowing gracefully to her friends as she saw them curtseying to her as she passed.

The ceremony in itself was an exceedingly brief one, and, indeed, would only have lasted a few minutes had not the Court Chaplain, Superintendent Kögel, thought it necessary to deliver an address to which no one listened. When he had finished the rings were exchanged, and guns fired to announce the event to the people gathered outside in front of the Palace. The Imperial and Royal personages then moved to the White Hall, where great court receptions were generally held, and took up their places under the dais, whilst in quick succession all the people invited to witness the ceremony filed past them, making a low obeisance to the newly married couples and to the Emperor and Empress. It was a splendid sight, and the trains and diamonds and precious stones of the ladies were truly wonderful.

The company then passed to the supper rooms, where a sumptuous meal was served, during which the old Emperor himself was the first to raise his glass in honour of his granddaughter and his niece, to whom he wished long life and happiness in a few well-chosen words. Then the most interesting part of the ceremony began. The brides and bridegrooms returned to the White Hall, where the general company had preceded them, taking their places opposite the dais, and leaving between it and themselves a large, open space which masters of the ceremonies kept free. Then each bride came in turn and, curtseying low before the Emperor, made one tour of the room with him, and later on with each Royal prince present, whilst their husbands did the same with the Empress, the Queen of the Belgians, and the other Princesses.

This quaint ceremony reminded one of the Middle Ages in its solemnity. First and foremost walked pages in red uniforms and powdered wigs; then all the members of the Ministry, each carrying a large and heavy wax candle, or rather torch, which, it must be admitted, they held most awkwardly. Then came the brides, and after them the bridegrooms, attended by other pages; the trains of the ladies were carried by small boys in scarlet coats and black velvet breeches. The ceremony, owing to the great number of Royal personages present, lasted something like an hour, but was followed the whole time with lively interest.

A very clever man, of whom I used to be extremely fond, Count Kleist, the brother of Princess Pless happened to be standing behind me, and he suddenly

bent down to my ear, saying as he did so, "The only thing which I regret is the absence of Prince Bismarck. It would have been so amusing to see him with a torch in his hand, making penance for his sins!"

Many festivities followed upon that evening, including, among other things, a State performance at the Opera, as well as a large ball, after which the young couples left Berlin, and the guests who had gathered there dispersed, more or less satisfied with all that they had seen and heard.

The next Royal marriage was that of the eldest sister of the Princess Elizabeth of Prussia, the Princess Mary, with old Prince Henry of the Netherlands. That ceremony took place at Potsdam, in August, 1878, and was celebrated under far simpler circumstances. The old Emperor was not present, being away in Teplitz, where he was slowly recovering from the wounds inflicted upon him by Nobiling. The Empress had returned to Coblenz, and the Crown Prince, who was Regent, represented his father, together with the Crown Princess, who thus found herself called upon, for the first time in her life, to appear in the quality of first lady in the land. The King of Holland, who was not yet married to the Princess Emma of Waldeck and Pyrmont, came over for the event, and everyone made a great fuss of him.

As for the bridegroom, he was close on seventy, and looked so weak and frail that one could not help pitying the fair young princess about to be married to him. The wedding took place in the long gallery of the New Palace, where an altar had been

erected for the occasion. It was followed the next day by a theatrical performance, and the bride and her aged husband left for The Hague that same evening.

Three months later the Princess was a widow, and suffered considerable annoyances from the King, who took care to appropriate to himself all the fortune of his brother, Prince Henry, the latter having died intestate. In consequence, the Princess Mary found herself reduced to what would have been penury had not the Queen Regent Emma interfered and insisted on a decent annuity being awarded to her young sister-in-law.

It was, so far as I can remember, at this wedding of her eldest sister that the Princess Louise Margaret of Prussia, youngest daughter of Prince and Princess Frederick Charles, met for the first time the Duke of Connaught, whom she was to marry a few months later at Windsor.

The next grand ceremony that I saw in Berlin was the celebration of the golden wedding of the Emperor and Empress. Unusual solemnity accompanied it, partly on account of the providential escape of William I. from the murderous hand of the assassin. The old sovereign having hardly recovered from its effects was still weak and frail; but when it was proposed to curtail part of the arrangements that had been planned by the Empress before his illness, he would not hear of it, but insisted that the whole programme should be carried out.

It was again an occasion for all the crowned heads of Germany to assemble in Berlin, and deputations

without number from all parts of the Empire participated. The Universities, which had until then stood more or less in opposition to the government of Prince Bismarck, waived their prejudices, and sent representatives to express their congratulations to the Emperor and to his Consort. Never have I seen the old Berlin Castle filled with a more motley crowd than on that occasion, and I never had so vivid an impression of the fact that the German people and its Emperor were indeed one in their aspirations and in celebrating the triumphs which they had obtained together.

A religious service opened the festivities, celebrated in that same chapel of the old castle which has always been associated with all the important events in the family life of the Hohenzollerns. It took place at midday, and the Empress Augusta made a magnificent entry into the small church, dressed in cloth of gold, and with the big diadem of brilliants that formed part of the Crown jewels. She looked quite splendid, and bore herself uncommonly well, considering the fact that her health had already begun to fail her.

I shall never forget that day for a personal reason. Next to where I stood was Prince Bismarck, looking extremely bored, but at the same time most interested in all that was going on before us. We began to talk, and I expressed my surprise to see him well enough to be able to stand the fatigue that such a long ceremony entailed. He smiled, and replied that there were occasions when fatigue ought not to be taken into account. While the voice of Superintendent Kögel sounded in our ears as he waded through a long, monotonous address, we discussed many subjects, and

among others the attitude of the Empress Augusta. "What a triumph for her is this day!" exclaimed the Chancellor. "And how happy she must feel to be able to engross everybody with attention concerning her own person!"

I have never forgotten the words, nor the accent in which they were delivered, which was in itself a revelation. Bismarck indeed did not like the Empress, and he was too brutally frank to attempt to hide it.

Two years later the marriage of the present Emperor William II. took place, also in Berlin. But I was not in the capital at the time, so can relate nothing about it. The next great festivity at which I assisted was the silver wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess, in honour of which a most magnificent pageant was arranged. It consisted in a reproduction—so perfect that it is remembered to this day by those who witnessed it—of the Court of Queen Elizabeth of England. Countess Udo Stolberg-Wernigerode, whose golden hair and most stately figure reminded one of the pictures left to us of the Virgin Queen, was asked to impersonate her, and she did it to perfection, appearing quite regal in her red velvet gown, with the enormous ruffle and stomacher worn in the days when the daughter of King Henry VIII. reigned and ruled over Merry England. She was followed by a whole train of courtiers and noble dames, amongst whom one pair attracted particular attention: Prince William of Prussia, with Lady Ampthill, the wife of the English Ambassador.

The cortège filed past the heroes of the day, and it was easy to see that the Crown Princess was positively delighted. She appeared radiant, and every now

and then, when a particularly handsome couple attracted her attention, she would bend toward her husband and make him look too. When the Court of Elizabeth had duly paraded, several couples entered the room and danced three quadrilles with great animation; one of them being an old minuet of the eighteenth century reminiscent of the glories of Versailles. These quadrilles over, a large sedan chair was brought in, out of which came a fairy, dressed in flowing robes and transparent veil, with a wand in her hand. Advancing toward the Crown Prince and Princess, she wished them every possible joy and happiness from all those who had taken part in the festival. The fairy was none other than the Princess William of Prussia, now German Empress.

The silver wedding of the unfortunate man who was to occupy for so short a time the throne of his fathers was the last great ceremony at which I was present in Berlin. The two or three seasons that I still spent there were not marked by any special social events. And in 1887 we went to Egypt, making a stay of nearly a year. Then, my father having died, we went to Russia, where for family reasons we were obliged to settle.

At that time the Emperor Frederick had already passed away, and things in Berlin had undergone a complete transformation. A new generation had grown up and changed the old order of affairs, under which Prussia had attained such unexampled prosperity. A few short years more, and both Moltke and Bismarck, together with the Empress Augusta and the Empress Frederick, were no more.

CHAPTER XI

SMART SOCIETY IN BERLIN

DURING the reign of William I. Berlin society was very different from what it is to-day. Berlin still bore a resemblance to a German Royal city of the eighteenth century. Social distinctions were very carefully observed, and the people in possession of the privilege of being "Hoffähig"—i.e. of being admitted at Court—avoided mixing with the financial or bourgeois society.

The officers formed a kind of caste, very jealous of its own rights. The Silesian or Rhenish aristocracy also kept aloof from other people, and rarely married outside their circle. The princely families, those who enjoyed the title of Durchlaucht or Serene Highness, enjoyed special privileges; though later, at the instigation of the Empress Augusta, they were taken away. These privileges consisted in the right to precede civil and military functionaries of the Empire at all court ceremonies, to present personally their congratulations to the Emperor on his birthday, as well as on the 1st of January, and to stand on the right of the throne during the official balls which were given at the old Castle of Berlin.

The Sovereigns were exceedingly sociable, and liked to honour with their presence the receptions given during the season in Berlin; one saw them at the balls

of the Count of Stolberg-Wernigerode, of Prince Pless, of the Dukes of Ratibor and Ujest, at my sister-in-law's, and at the different foreign Ambassadors and Ministers. I cannot say that the presence of the Empress Augusta added to the enjoyment of these occasions, but nevertheless invitations to houses which Augusta visited were treasured, because it gave one an established status in the society of the capital.

Except for these large and solemn receptions there were not many parties in Berlin at that time. The elegance which reigns there now was as yet unknown. One wore high gowns for dinner, and balls as well as receptions began usually at eight o'clock—very rarely later. On the other hand, members of each social circle used to see a great deal of each other, but these circles were very exclusive; one never met any foreigners. There were also a few houses which were always open to officers of the Guards. These were cruelly described in the famous book called "La Société de Berlin," which created such a sensation at the time it was published, but as I never frequented the houses referred to I cannot say if the description was true or not, though I must own that manners generally were very loose in the capital of William I., where there was nothing between great dullness and excessive liberty of action as well as of language, and it was principally for this reason that Berlin was not a pleasant place to live in. Small talk, such as enjoyed in Paris, London, or St. Petersburg, did not exist. One was not often asked to dine out, and when this happened it was always at most ceremonial meals and

at such extraordinary hours that these invitations could only be considered as a kind of penance, to be undergone with the best grace possible.

I have mentioned the princely families which formed a special circle in the capital. Among them, first of all, were the numerous Princes Hohenlohe, all of whom were the objects of special attention from the Royal Family.

Prince Hohenlohe-Langenbourg, the head of the family, was married to a Princess of Baden, and did not often make an appearance in Berlin. They did not possess a house in the capital, and could not therefore entertain. He was considered to be a very clever man, whilst his wife was charming. Unlike so many German Princesses, she was entirely free from haughtiness.

Prince Clovis—who later on replaced Bismarck as Chancellor of the Empire—generally made a point of spending part of the season in Berlin. He was so well known and is so very well remembered that I need not describe him in detail. He presented an absolute contrast to his great predecessor, both in manners and in his turn of mind, being most refined and essentially a nobleman of ancient lineage, with proud and illustrious ancestors. His wife, who was called Macha by those who knew her well, was allied through her mother to the Radziwill family, and I used to see her often. She was a very great lady, though rather brusque in her manners, and reminded one sometimes of the Duchess de Sagan. She was also very fond of sport.

The Duke of Ratibor was the younger brother of

Prince Clovis. He was married to a Princess of Fürstenberg, the sister of the Duchess of Ujest—a woman of saintly character, who spent her whole life at home, bringing up her numerous children. She was ugly, and anything but intelligent; but she was so entirely good and kind that it was impossible not to respect and like her. Sometimes she used to take out into society a couple of daughters unfavoured in their looks, for whom she gave splendid but solemn balls, which the Emperor and the Empress never failed to honour with their presence. Her husband had earned for himself the hatred of the Catholic Party because he had supported the policy of Prince Bismarck, and had voted for the famous Falk laws which brought about the Kulturkampf. At one time he had been considered the head of the State Catholics, and in Ultramontane circles he was accused of having become a renegade in order to obtain the help of the Chancellor in his money affairs, which at one time were much embarrassed. Personally, I do not think that this reproach was deserved. I feel sure that the Duke of Ratibor adopted the line of conduct which he followed until his death, simply because he was a clever man, and had a considerable amount of common sense.

His brother-in-law, the Duke of Ujest, shared his political opinions, but was not reproached for them, because he had always been a Protestant. The Duke of Ujest was one of the richest men in Germany, but he did not own a house in Berlin. The Duke of Ratibor, on the other hand, built for himself a veritable palace there, which subsequently became the Austrian embassy. The Duke was a tall, old man, who made astonishingly

dull speeches and had a very disagreeable manner. He died a long time ago, and his eldest son, a really charming man, has never married. Thus the late Duke's enormous fortune, together with the entailed family estates, will pass to one of his younger brothers.

The Prince of Pless could rival the Duke of Ujest as regards riches. He used to spend every winter season in Berlin, where he lived in princely style, giving sumptuous receptions. Count and Countess Stolberg-Wernigerode also kept open house. The Stolbergs, formerly reigning Counts of the Harz, where to this day the head of their House is called "Unser Graf" by the inhabitants, were the owners of the splendid castle of Wernigerode, an old feudal stronghold which stands proudly on the top of a high moun tain, and surpasses in magnificence many royal residences. Count Stolberg and his wife, a Princess Reuss by birth, and aunt of the Bulgarian Queen, had a house of their own in Berlin, where they arranged most splendid balls, at which the old Emperor was always present. At one time the Count played an important part in Prussian politics, and occupied the post of Vice-Chancellor during an illness of Prince Bismarck, who appreciated him as much as he could appreciate anybody. He had also been for some years ambassador in Vienna. The Countess, by her amiability and charm of manner, made one forget her want of beauty.

For the anniversary of the Emperor's birthday nearly all the representatives of the princely families of Germany gathered together in the capital. It was on one of these occasions that I saw the late Duke of Croy, with his second wife, the widow of the Spanish

Duke of Ossuna, who had been a famous beauty in her youth, and who still was a very handsome woman. I also met Prince and Princess Hatzfeld Trachenberg. The latter was a Russian by birth, and extremely pretty, too, though rather ill-natured and pretentious.

Periodically, Prince Blücher von Wahlstadt, the grandson of the famous Marshal, used to visit Berlin. Tradition says that a mother-in-law never finds anything kind to say about her son-in-law. Perhaps, therefore, I ought to say something cutting about mine; but speaking quite truly, I cannot. My daughter is married to Prince Blücher, and her happiness—which I believe to be very great and real—inspires me with respect.

He is immensely rich, but exceedingly careful of his money, an instance of which I have already mentioned in the chapters of my English visit.

Catholicism and economy are his two ruling passions. He is a fierce Catholic, who will hardly admit the possibility of a Protestant entering the kingdom of Heaven. I remember another incident which made me smile. It occurred while we were still in London. He proposed that we should go and dine at Richmond. As it happened, when he suggested the plan, there was a mutual friend of ours present in the room, whom we asked to accompany us. The next day Prince Blücher came to see me, and brought me the bill for the dinner, saying at the same time, "This is your share, and this is mine; and now what shall we do with Meredith? I propose we should halve him, and each of us pay one-half of his dinner."

The persons whom I have just mentioned constituted

the Upper Ten of Berlin society. Around them gravitated a number of lesser stars, who certainly did more to add to the gaiety of life than the august personages I have described. Subscription balls and so forth were given at the Kaiserhof hotel during the season for the benefit of the youth of the community who cared for dancing and pleasure. Real friendships, however, were rare, and as a result there was an inordinate love of gossip which entirely poisoned existence and transformed each home into a glasshouse which remained exposed to the glances of every passer-by.

Berlin at that time was a very small place, and one was never allowed to forget that fact, either at Court or anywhere else. The Empress liked to be kept *au courant* of everything that was going on, and as a result of her curiosity the people in her confidence spent most of their time looking out for subjects of gossip with which they might amuse her. One had, therefore, to be very cautious in one's actions. The Empress's love of gossip exercised a most undesirable influence on society, and I think that many diplomats who were obliged to live in Berlin at the time suffered from it.

CHAPTER XII

A FEW BERLIN HOSTESSES

AMONG the few houses where one could spend one's time really pleasantly in Berlin, but which, unfortunately, opened its doors only to a very, very small circle, may be mentioned that of the old Princess Biron of Curland. She was Russian by birth, being a member of the old family of the Princes Mestchersky, and was queenly in everything she did. The Emperor was very fond of her; the Empress did not quite appreciate her, finding her too independent in her attitude, as well as in her language; but others who had the honour of knowing her respected her, and it was considered a great favour to be admitted to her house.

Once she had received you and opened her heart to you, you could count on her friendship and on her protection always and in everything. She only admitted a very few people to her intimacy, and one of her greatest friends was the Countess Louise Oriolla, the lady-in-waiting to the Empress.

Princess Biron of Curland had a deep and sincere affection for the old Emperor William. I shall never forget her emotion at the time of Nobiling's attempt to assassinate the aged monarch. When the latter returned to Berlin after his recovery from the long

illness which had followed upon the wounds he had received, the Princess, who was always extremely kind towards me, wrote me a note saying that he intended going to the Opera on the same evening, and that if I liked to go too she had a place for me in her box. Of course I accepted her offer with pleasure, and thus had an opportunity of witnessing one of the most touching manifestations of the affection which the German people bore their old King.

When we reached the Opera the public was not yet aware that the Emperor was expected. It was quite a surprise, therefore, when the doors of the small side box which the Royal Family used to occupy were opened, and the old Sovereign quietly entered and sat down in his usual seat in the left-hand corner. The first person who caught sight of him exclaimed, "Der Kaiser—der Kaiser ist hier!" Instantly the whole house was on its feet, and one loud cry escaped the lips of every single person in it. "Der König! Der König! Hoch und hoch und nochmals hoch!" (The King! The King! Three cheers for the King!) thus repeating the old German acclamation used on similar occasions. I do not think that anyone who witnessed that scene has ever been able to forget it.

The enthusiasm was indescribable. Men yelled; women threw their handkerchiefs in the air; sobs were heard, and all these human beings, so different in tastes, in habits, in social conditions, found themselves for once carried away by a united feeling of affection toward their beloved sovereign as once more he appeared among them.

The Emperor came to the front of the box, and

for a few seconds remained quite still, looking at the acclaiming, excited crowd. He made a gesture as if he wanted to speak; then, as if unable to bear any more, he withdrew to the back of his box, but as he did so one could see him wipe away a tear that had rolled down his withered cheeks.

The house of Princess Biron of Curland was especially the meeting-place of the members of the Royal Household and of the Russian Embassy. Madame de Radowitz, *née* Ozeroff, who was also a Russian, and whose husband, later to become Ambassador at Constantinople and at Madrid, was often to be seen there. The receptions the Princess gave were always amusing, especially during the lifetime of her daughter-in-law, who, unfortunately, died quite young.

There was also another house in Berlin where all the intellectual and artistic elements in the capital used to assemble. It was that of the Countess Schleinitz, who later became the Countess Volkenstein and well known in St. Petersburg and Paris, where her husband spent some years as Austrian Ambassador. The Countess was a most original person, a devoted admirer of Wagner and of his music. She was passionately devoted to painting and art in general, was a great friend of Lenbach, of Madame Cosima Wagner, and generally of all those who represented in Germany and elsewhere the school of philosophy of Schopenhauer and the music of the future. She did not, however, pose as a great scholar or a great thinker, though she liked to surround herself with people who were. Her receptions were always most interesting.

Count and Countess Schleinitz

The Countess Schleinitz was a great friend of the Crown Princess, who used to see her very often, and always defended her against the numerous attacks of the many people who envied her for the exceptional position she had made for herself, thanks to her rare and brilliant qualities. Her husband, the Baron, afterwards Count Schleinitz, had been Minister for Foreign Affairs in Prussia before Prince Bismarck, and had contrived to make an enemy of him. The Chancellor hated his predecessor so thoroughly that he forbade all officials of the Foreign Office to be present at the funeral of their former chief. This petty act of vengeance is one of the ugliest pages in the book of Prince Bismarck's life.

Count Schleinitz during the last years of his life held the post of Minister of the Imperial Household, and as such occupied a magnificent house in the Wilhelmstrasse which his wife had arranged with consummate taste. Here at one time she gave charming balls. Later, however, she gave up official receptions, and contented herself with seeing a few friends in the evening. This, however, did not prevent the Chancellor from accusing her of mixing in politics and trying to thwart him in everything that he wanted to do.

Prince Bismarck was wrong in the feelings of aversion which he entertained in regard to Count and Countess Schleinitz. Neither of them ever thought of intriguing against him. The Countess lived in an artistic atmosphere, whilst her husband, who was already very aged, only wanted to be left alone. He knew that the Emperor liked him and that he was in

possession of his confidence, and he did not care for or require anything else.

Count Schleinitz died at an advanced age, and his widow married again as soon as her mourning was over. She left Berlin, not without regret, and after her second husband, Count Volkenstein, had retired from diplomatic life she returned to the German capital, where she used to receive her former acquaintances in the flat she took at an hotel, with the same kindness and affability she had shown in the time when she was occupying one of the finest houses in the town. She was always charming and pleasant, and was much regretted by her numerous friends, on her death a few years ago.

One of those whom one met constantly at Countess Schleinitz' was Prince von Bülow; at that time he had yet to achieve the fame which earned his title. He was then a young attaché at the Foreign Office. I think that it was at this time that the romance began which was to end with the marriage of the former Chancellor to the very distinguished lady who now bears his name. Countess Schleinitz was very fond of Italy, and used to spend part of the year in Venice, where her mother, the Princess Hatzfeld, was permanently established. She had met there Donna Laura Minghetti, and a great friendship sprung up between the two women—a friendship which was to benefit later the Countess Donhoff, now the Princess Bülow, who was the daughter of Donna Laura by her first marriage with the Prince of Camporeale.

In addition to the houses I have just mentioned, Berlin society frequently met at the house of the

Baroness Pergler von Preglas, wife of the Bavarian Minister. She used to receive every day. Her salon was the centre of all the gossip of the town, and as such sometimes became a source of social danger for those who frequented it.

The Countess Max Oriolla, the sister-in-law of the Countess Louise, also gave small and most select receptions. She was by birth a Countess Arnim, and the daughter of the famous Bettina, made ever memorable by Goethe. She was extremely clever, but was generally dreaded on account of her sharp tongue. Her parties were terribly dull, though no one dared to acknowledge the fact.

I must not forget, in this recapitulation of Berlin hostesses, to mention Madame Cornélie Richter, the wife of the painter of that name and the daughter of the composer Meyerbeer, one of the closest friends of the Crown Princess, and a most distinguished woman. She had a sister, the Baroness d'Andriani, who used to visit Berlin, where she enjoyed the special friendship of the Emperor, who was very fond of her.

Richter was one of the most popular artists of modern Germany; some of his portraits are really masterpieces—such, for instance, as the one he did of the Queen Louise of Prussia, which is now in the Town Hall of Cologne, and for which sat one of the loveliest young girls who ever appeared in Berlin, the Countess von Moltke, who was afterwards to become the wife of the painter Lenbach. The portrait of the beautiful Princess Carolath, which figured at the Paris Exhibition of 1878, is also by Richter; so is that of the pretty Countess de Villeneuve. Richter had the

gift of being always able to achieve in his paintings an idealised conception of his models, and this was partly the reason why he was so popular as a portrait painter.

Richter had a rival in the person of Count Ferdinand Harrach, a nobleman of ancient lineage and an artist of great talent, who painted more for pleasure than profit. He formed one of the small circle of friends which assembled in the house of the Heir to the Throne. He also arranged the several fancy balls that were given by the Crown Princess. The Countess Hélène Pourtalès, whom he married, was a very pretty woman, and one used to meet her frequently in society, but she did not give receptions herself.

As I am talking of the artists whom I had the opportunity of meeting in Berlin, I cannot pass by in silence the little Menzel, to whom one owes all the pictures which we see in Potsdam which represent the Court of the Great Frederick and that of William I. He was a small, eccentric man, a real dwarf in size and proportions. He used to go about with a busy air among the guests at all the balls given in the Imperial Palace with notebook and pencil in hand, and without the least ceremony, whenever he saw a face that pleased him, or which he thought he could make use of, he would make a rapid sketch, displaying no sign of observing the confusion of the subject. I have never spoken with him, but I have often found myself near him, and amused myself in watching him. I never remember having seen him anywhere but at the Imperial Palace.

The Austrian painter Angeli used also to visit

Berlin frequently, where he was generally the guest of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess. One owes to his brush the two most beautiful portraits that have ever been painted of the heir to the German Throne and of his Consort. The latter had a great sympathy for Angeli, and appreciated his conversation, which was original and witty. He became one of her personal friends, and I even think—though I cannot say so for certain—that he gave her a few drawing lessons. He was rather unconventional in his language and manners, and it is related that he had once allowed himself to make some remarks to his Imperial pupil concerning the manner in which she dressed, which he thought was not to her advantage. The Princess did not take the observation in good part, and for some time showed him considerable coolness. I will not assume any responsibility as to the truth of this anecdote, but it was talked about all over Berlin at the time, and even reached the ears of the Empress, whom it scandalised considerably, and who did not spare her reproaches to her daughter-in-law, whose attitude had allowed such a story to get about.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RADZIWILL FAMILY

AT the time of my first marriage, the Radziwill family still held an important position at the Berlin Court. This was largely due to its ties of relationship with the Royal Family, the niece of Frederick the Great having been married to my husband's grandfather, Prince Anthony Radziwill. I am going now to relate an anecdote, I believe for the first time, concerning the parents of that Prussian Princess.

In the year of grace 1768, Frederick II. was already fifty-six years of age. He had never lived with Queen Elisabeth Christina, whom his father had obliged him to marry, and his relations with her were more than extraordinary, because he never even consented to speak to her, and when he had anything to communicate, he did so in writing. His niece, the Princess Louise, has related in her memoirs, published two or three years ago, some curious details concerning the relations of the King with the Queen.

Describing a dinner at Court, she writes as follows :

" Whilst we were all waiting for the King, in the Queen's study, Elisabeth herself was leaning against a chest of drawers, as one of her legs was causing her considerable pain at the time, and only allowed her to walk with difficulty.

"The King came in, and stopped near the door to speak to Madame von Kaunenberg, the mistress of the robes to the Queen, asking her in a very loud voice for news of the latter's health, and requesting her to beg Her Majesty to sit down, which, however, the Queen did not consent to do; then he passed before her, bowing profoundly as he did so.

"After having talked with us all, the King took up his place next to the dining-room door, and the Queen, the Princesses, and all the other ladies filed past him in silence."

This story will explain better than I could ever do the unnatural relations which existed between Frederick the Great and his Consort. His nephew and heir presumptive, the son of his younger brother, Prince August William, had only one daughter by his marriage with the Princess Elisabeth of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Moreover, he did not live with his wife, and was divorced from her later. Prince Henry of Prussia's union with the Princess Wilhelmina of Hesse Cassel had been childless, and the second brother of Frederick II., Prince Ferdinand, who was married to a Princess of Brandenburg-Schwedt, had an only daughter born in 1761, who was a cripple, and died when only eleven years old.

Frederick the Great began to be uneasy concerning the succession to the Prussian Throne. After several years, however, the Princess Ferdinand, on May 24th, 1770, gave birth to the Princess Louise (who was to become the wife of Prince Anthony Radziwill), and later to two Princes, Frederick-Christian and Louis. Apart from this, the nephew of the King, having

divorced the Princess of Brunswick, married a Princess of Hesse, by whom he had a son, the future King Frederick-William III.

The succession to the Throne was consequently more than assured.

When I married, the Radziwill family, though numerous, was anything but united, and quarrels were a daily occurrence. They all lived together in the house which was bought later on by the German Government for the use of the Chancellor of the Empire. The Empress used to visit it often in order to see my mother and sister-in-law.

The family undoubtedly exercised great influence during the lifetime of my father-in-law, owing to the fact that he had been brought up together with the old King, who had been violently in love with his sister, the Princess Eliza Radziwill. The King never ceased to love her, and though he was obliged to sacrifice his love for reasons of State, he always kept the Princess's portrait on his writing-table.

When my father-in-law died, his eldest son, Anthony, was already attached to the person of the Sovereign as an aide-de-camp. William I. was very fond of him. I have never been able to understand why, because it is probable that if Prince Anthony had not been married to an exceedingly clever woman he would never have done anything. Mlle. de Castellane, with whom he had associated his fate, was one of those rare women who command general respect and admiration. She was remarkable not only because of her intelligence, her wit, and her kindliness, but also by reason of her perfect tact and strength of character. Her life was

not happy, and she must often have experienced the sensation of feeling choked in the heavy atmosphere of the Radziwill household. She never showed it in public, however, and went her way always serene and courageous amidst the difficulties and disappointments which abounded in her life. If ever a woman lived who was worthy of the respect of friend and foe alike, it is my sister-in-law; and if ever these lines should fall under her eyes, I hope that she will see in them a proof of the gratitude which I feel for the many kindnesses with which she has loaded me in the past.

So long as old Prince Radziwill was alive my sister-in-law could not have a household of her own, and even after his death my mother-in-law insisted on managing affairs. But when she died Princess Mary Radziwill opened her house to her numerous friends, and it is to this day a centre, unique in Berlin society.

As I have already related, there was a time when the Radziwill family exercised a certain political influence. In speaking about it, I have in view the part played by the cousins of my husband, Prince Ferdinand, as well as by his brother, who was at one time a deputy in the Reichstag. Prince Ferdinand is a devout Catholic, with a fierce Polish patriotism, and is always considered as the head of the Polish party at the Berlin Court. It is undoubtedly true that whilst the Kulturkampf lasted, he and his wife took part in numerous intrigues against the Government. He sincerely imagined that the status enjoyed by his family was still as strong as it had been in his father's lifetime, and that the Radziwills could, thanks to their personal influence over the Sovereign, check the designs

of the Chancellor. No one ever made a greater mistake. It was very easy for Bismarck to get rid of his feeble adversaries, and with the help of time and perseverance, the Chancellor succeeded in destroying the influence of the Radziwill family.

My sister-in-law is the only one who continues to live in Berlin. She is one of the last of the old-time great ladies left in the capital of the Empire. A considerable number of people go and see her through sheer curiosity, so entirely does she represent a period of German history. She remembers still the kingdom of Prussia as it was, a period few care to remind themselves of to-day. She knew the present Emperor as a child, and has lived in the intimacy of people who have become already historical figures. And what must to her seem sadder still, she has witnessed the fall of her own family. I imagine that often in the silence of her room she has wept over the ruin of so many things in the greatness of which she has probably believed, and which have crumbled into dust before her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD OF BERLIN

AFTER all that I have said, the reader may think that it was impossible to find in Berlin people with intellectual tastes. Such an opinion would be quite false. I believe it would be very difficult to find anywhere else such an abundance of learned men and eminent writers as in Germany at the time of which I am writing; but they formed a circle quite distinct from the so-called smart set.

It was only at the Crown Prince and Crown Princess's house that one could have the opportunity of meeting men like the historian Ranke, the chemist Helmholtz, and all the other professors of the Berlin University. In general, these learned men only mixed with each other, and never came out of their own set, into which it was most difficult to obtain an introduction. I succeeded in doing so through my doctor, Professor Gusserow, who was married to a Miss Oppenheim of Cologne, related to the Mendelssohn-Bartholdys. She introduced me in her own circle, and I was thus able to frequent that exclusive world of the University. I have spent evenings—which I shall never forget—with Professor Dubois Raymond; Leyden the physician; Gregorovius the historian, during one of his rare visits to Berlin; Helm-

holtz and his charming wife, the niece of old Madame Mohl, whose house was at one time celebrated in Paris. Mrs. Helmholtz had also relations in the fashionable set where she was seen now and then, but the others whom I have just mentioned never showed themselves in it. These evenings will always remain in my remembrance like an oasis in that desert which Berlin—or at least that portion of Berlin society into which Fate had thrown me—represented; and from the distinguished men and women whom I met, I learned many things which have helped me in life.

The old historian Ranke was, above all other German celebrities, the one with whom I entertained the most cordial relations. This illustrious thinker distinguished himself by an impartiality in his judgments such as I have never met with in anyone. He was entirely devoid of any prejudice or sympathy. He used to pretend that every political crime was accompanied by extenuating circumstances that took away some part of its horror. The misfortunes of Marie Antoinette, the tragedy of Mary Stuart, left him quite indifferent; he accused both the French Convention and Queen Elizabeth of cruelty, but, he added, when doing so, that if one tried to take into account the situation in which each was placed, good reasons were discovered to explain the apparent barbarity displayed by the one as well as by the other. He habitually avoided final judgments on anything. This caution proceeded not from a feeling of indulgence, but out of a spirit of impartiality which often jarred on the nerves of those before whom he displayed it. Ranke lacked a sympathetic personality, but he had

a strong faith in God, in spite of the absolute indifference which he professed in all religious matters.

When he found himself near his last hours, not suffering from any disease but crushed under the weight of his years—he was over ninety-five—he asked the people who surrounded his death-bed to read to him the Psalms of David, especially the fourth. When the reader reached the verse "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep," the head of the illustrious thinker bent down, he softly sighed, and his soul peacefully passed away.

Helmholtz, the chemist, had, to a far greater degree than Ranke, the manners of a man of the world. The historian lived entirely absorbed by his thoughts. The man of science seemed, on the contrary, to have determined that, once outside his laboratory, he would never remember the great work to which he owed his reputation. He liked to talk about literature, and interest himself in politics. When he received friends in his house he showed himself a perfect host, and looked after his guests as if he had nothing else to do in the world. Mrs. Helmholtz used to second him most graciously, and all those who had been fortunate enough to be admitted to their home were enchanted with the kind welcome they received.

The couple had an only daughter, who was married later to the son of the famous Siemens, the learned electrician, and I have been told that she has become one of the smartest women in Berlin, where happily at the present day but little distance separates the different classes of society.

At the period I am writing about, however, these

distances were rigorously observed, and in that respect the higher classes were far more exclusive than even the Court itself. For instance, though old Baron von Bleichroder and his wife were invited to every ball that was given at the Royal Castle, many people refused to visit them.

This famous Baron was a type and a social power in a way, thanks to his relations with Prince Bismarck, whose confidant he was in many matters, and who protected him constantly. One could meet him every day, walking in the Thiergarten in company with his wife, and after her death, when he became almost entirely blind, he would take his walks leaning on the arm of a secretary.

Many people feared him, but others whom he helped out of financial troubles had occasion to be grateful to him in his capacity as a banker. Latterly he almost entirely dissociated himself from his vast business, and abandoned its direction to his partner, Schwabach. Madame Schwabach was a very pretty woman, and her receptions were frequented by all the diplomats at the Berlin Court, as well as by a certain smart set, who did not mind being disapproved by the stern dowagers who wished to keep up the barrier that formerly divided Jewish society from other circles admitted at Court.

There was also another banker in Berlin into whose house were welcomed all who cared to enter. It was the house of Baron von Hansemann, the head of the *Disconto Gesellschaft*, one of the most important banks in the Empire, and one could meet there people belonging to the special world of the University, as

well as political men and the representatives of different classes of society. The Baron, who was enormously rich, liked to give receptions and dinners where the elegance of the service rivalled the excellence of the fare and wines.

I can say now what I would never have dared to own whilst I was living in Berlin, that it was in the financial and the University circles that I used to spend the happiest moments of my life; I shall never forget how kindly I was received in them, nor cease to be grateful for the welcome which they extended to me.

CHAPTER XV

PRINCE VON BISMARCK

FROM the time of my introduction to Princess Bismarck and her splendid husband, "The Iron Chancellor," until my sojourn in Berlin came to an end, I always maintained a cordial friendship with both.

This, in a way, was remarkable, because I was the only member of the Radziwill family admitted within the circle of their regard. I visited them frequently, and for both had the greatest respect, while, on the other hand, Bismarck and his wife were most gracious at all times.

When I say that such happy relations were rather remarkable, my mind goes back to an incident which shows how severe the Chancellor could be when he felt cause for grievance. In passing, it is a sincere tribute to the strength of his personality that, although the action which I am about to relate was directed against a member of my own family, he never allowed it to interfere with his friendliness towards myself.

In the summer months of 1874 my brother-in-law was at Ems with the Emperor. At this time, it should be mentioned, the great struggle between the Roman Church and Bismarck was at its height, and my

husband's family, being of the Catholic persuasion, took an exceedingly active part in the Kulturkampf, as the movement was called, which aimed at a wider recognition of the claims of Rome. Indeed, the Radziwills were considered to be at the head of the Catholic party in Prussia, and so were constantly associated with other leaders in activities directly in opposition to the Chancellor. Precisely the extent to which my people went, and how far they happened to be mixed up in the intrigues which networked political life in those eventful years, I cannot say.

But Prince von Bismarck chose to consider that their efforts were significant. My feeling is that he attached more importance to what my people did in opposition to his plans than was really warranted. Still, it was evident that they were a prolific source of irritation to him, and everything that could possibly be conceived for the purpose of annoying him was resorted to. However harmless in political effect such tactics may be, one can understand that a continuance of unceasing irritations has a maddening effect, and where an opportunity presented itself to retaliate, even though little practical result was expected, the chance was taken, because of the annoyance and chagrin it would cause.

My knowledge of the Chancellor's character has led me into some byway of explanation to bring before the reader an eye-picture of the situation at that time when the police raided the Radziwill palace. Our position as a family was far too secure with the Emperor—if I may say so without egotism—for anyone to assail our loyalty unless backed with positive demon-

stration that we were guilty of intrigue. This being so, it was difficult for Bismarck openly to attack, for, naturally, it was next to impossible for him to obtain proofs of anything in this way.

In the June of the year I have mentioned some half-dozen of us were in the immense old house. The dinner-gong had gone, and we were descending the ancient staircase to the dining-room, when suddenly, to our surprise and amazement, we were confronted by the police. We could not conjecture the reason of so unwarrantable an intrusion, and demanded to be told the reason for this domiciliary visit. The police explained to my husband's cousins, who had remonstrated warmly, that they had been ordered to take possession and to search the room which my brother-in-law's secretary used for his work. The secretary, von Kehler, who, by the way, had formerly been a clerk in the Foreign Office, was a convert to the Roman Catholic faith, and as so often is the case with converts from Protestantism, his zeal for his new belief knew no bounds. His fanaticism, however, did not prevent him from being a most congenial companion and a really amiable man. He was an influential member of the Reichstag, and he always commanded the respect of our family.

Doubtless, under the pretence of searching through von Kehler's desk, the police had the expectation of discovering some incriminating document belonging to my brother-in-law or my cousin.

Whether they did so or not I was never able to discover, but in my own mind I have always felt that the precautions taken were too many to leave any

likelihood of discoveries which would involve either the family or the party.

In reality this raid was entirely unwarranted, but it vividly expresses the methods of the man and the manner in which he could command others to carry out his wishes, that Bismarck should not have hesitated to put his plans into execution. Truly Bismarckian this; ruthless and regardless of law so long as its ends were achieved.

At the time Bismarck perpetrated this act of high-handed invasion I had only known him a short while. It was less than a year after my marriage, and some six months only after the introduction to which I have referred, and which took place on New Year's night at the reception given by the Empress Augusta to the princely families residing in Berlin. This was some years before Bismarck retired to the privacy and quietness of his homes at Varzin and Friedrichsruhe. I remember so well being impressed by his fine commanding figure, the stalwartness of his pose, the indomitable power which was expressed in his every glance. Yet there seemed to lurk beneath that iron exterior an inner kindliness that could be noticed momentarily to reside in his eyes when some homely incident or simple thought banished the habitual sternness from his face. To the observant this revealed the real man, and yet, such was his patriotism and ambition for his country—the country he saw consolidated into a power by his own efforts—that this homely nature, and kindliness were kept subservient to the great purpose of his life.

As the years went on I found my first impression

but confirmed; indeed, among the dominating personalities in those years of evolution which saw the German Empire emerge, consolidated and eager, from the conflicting interests of many small States, none impressed itself on my memory with greater vividness than that of Bismarck.

It is not infrequently a characteristic of powerful minds that they cannot follow the curious methods of reasoning by which stupid people come to wrong conclusions. Bismarck was no exception. Where he should have been amused at the petty efforts of petty politicians and intriguers of no great mental power, because of their lack of understanding the real causes of great events in the national evolution, he allowed their want of foresight to irritate him, and, what was still more regrettable, gave them the joy of knowing that fact. This caused various of these plotters to conceive that because they had this power they were of importance in the making of history. Bismarck would have done better for his own peace of mind to have left one and all severely alone and continued his great work in the knowledge that at least his royal master, William I., and himself, rightly understood those great events which brought the diadem of Barbarossa into the possession of the Hohenzollern dynasty.

The general public imagined that nothing had been changed; they failed to realise that after the triumphs of Sadowa and Sedan neither the Emperor nor his ministers could proceed upon the same lines as before. No longer were they the heads of a mid-European State; their territory was now of wider

significance; their eyes were lifted toward the hills, and in the consummation of 1871 they saw the beginnings of an Empire which should be wide-spreading in territory, far-reaching in power, and knit together by a love for the Fatherland which should make the German Empire supreme in the councils of Europe.

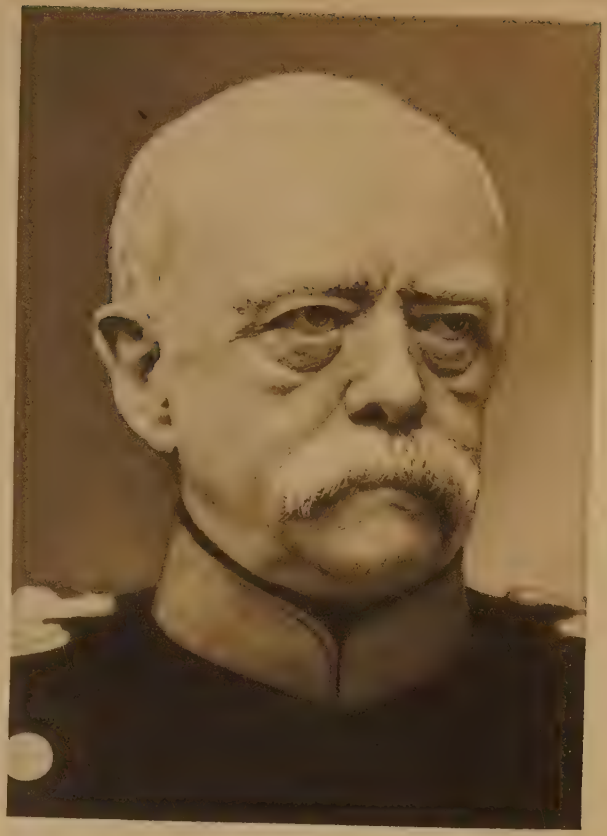
Instead of this being used to the restricted activities of the small Prussian Court, some thought, when Bismarck rose as the dominating influence, that it would be easy to remove him by an intrigue for the purpose of undermining the Emperor's confidence in him. In the religious question involved in the Kulturkampf the Empress Augusta was emphatic and decided in her opposition. She sincerely believed, and continually prophesied, that continuance in the policy adopted would bring the State to ruin. Because this certainty prepossessed her mind, the Empress would not desist from exerting her personal influence to compel William to stop Bismarck's propaganda. In season and out of season she strenuously forced the idea upon the Emperor, until in exasperation he put his foot down, and in this and other directions stopped the efforts of "politicians in petticoats" to bend history to their opinions or ambitions.

Bismarck was not blind to all this intrigue; he knew, too, the effect it had on the religious question, which would not have acquired such strength had not the erroneous conclusion been arrived at that friends in high circles and partisans in the Reichstag held the key to the situation. In this the interested parties again showed a lack of comprehension of the fact that Prussia could no longer be classed as a little

State, content to jog along as other of the small German States.

The agile intelligence of Bismarck had readily grasped the change that events of a few years before had wrought in the prospects and destiny of Prussia. William I., too, had a similar vision of the glorious future, and it was this realisation which they held in common, but which so few others had shared, that brought them so close to each other. It was almost affecting to discern the respect in which the Emperor and his Chancellor held each other. And amid the vindictive and unbending policy Bismarck adopted to his enemies, it was touching in the extreme to observe the reverence he expressed in his bearing towards William I. When he looked at his Sovereign it seemed as if he were pouring out a sincere and soulful affection, and when importunate personages thrust unwelcome requests before the aged monarch, there was something almost maternal in the efforts the stern and impassive Chancellor would make to rid his Emperor of undesired attentions.

The history of the Kulturkampf is inseparable from the biography of Bismarck. The whole force of his magnificent intellect, the relentless use of his far-reaching power, the weight of his enormous influence, were exerted to crush it. Yet it was not, perhaps, the atrocious thing that the Chancellor believed it to be. He arrived early at the conclusion that it was a movement inimical to the progress of the new German Empire, and so he set out to crush it. On the other hand, sincere Catholics, every whit as loyal to the Empire as Bismarck, upheld and worked for the Kul-



PRINCE VON BISMARCK.

COUNT VON MOLTKE.

turkampf as entirely for good. They looked on the movement as intended to secure acceptable education for Catholics within the dominions of the German Empire should the struggle eventuate in favour of the adherents of Rome. Bismarck fought for State control of religious education; the Catholics to conserve the right to follow the dictates of their faith. That, in brief, was the *motif* of the long and bitter struggle that not only shook Germany from end to end as a reed, but was looked upon with no little apprehension and wonder as to its ultimate issue by the leading statesmen of Europe.

Bismarck was always a good fighter, an enemy who compelled respect for the ceaseless energy with which he beat down every barrier, and the undaunted manner in which he fought for what he believed was best for his loved Empire. Seeing him in those moments of fierce battle, it was difficult to believe the stories one heard of the tender and sweet simplicity of his home life. Yet it was unreservedly true. At those times when he was able to throw aside for a brief season the anxieties and harassments of State affairs, he would retire to his home and there lead the happiest life it is possible to imagine. He was absolutely charming, and his wife was to him the best of mortals. They never allowed outside affairs to disturb the sweetness and harmony of their affection for each other. On religious questions they were poles apart, but even here—the stumbling-block in so many cases—they were quite in harmony in agreeing to differ. There is no doubt that the Princess's homely characteristics contributed not a little to

this perfection of harmony, for had she been a brilliant and dashing woman of the world the peaceful atmosphere of the home life would not have been so marked. It was all for the best that this home-loving woman could preserve for her Prince such a haven of restful quietude, where he could find grateful ease from the tension and nerve-wrack of his tempestuous public life.

Added to this quality, the Princess, after her own fashion, presented a striking and unusual personality by reason of the strong intelligence and common sense which she brought to bear upon her mode of life, upon various things which interested her, or in the expression of her opinions. These are very useful qualities to find in the wife of a statesman, and because of these endowments it was always a sincere pleasure to me to meet and talk with the Princess.

There was never any doubt of her entire love for her husband. Her devotion, too, was sweet and unswerving. To her he was always the husband before he was the Chancellor. But at the same time she unsparingly sacrificed her claims on his time in order that he might the better serve the State. This trait in her character was, to my mind, the more commendable because, despite her perception, she was unable to enter into the magnitude of his achievements so far as they affected the future of Germany. She knew he was a great man, and rejoiced exceedingly, with happy pride, in his outstanding genius and the splendour of his diplomatic successes, but the vast debt which generations unborn would owe to the Chancellor did not impress her soul. The greatness

of her love was far more real to her than any love of greatness, and the things of moment which were daily achieved by Bismarck were only of interest to her because her husband had accomplished them. In her the wife was paramount, and her greatest content was to watch over Bismarck with all the tenderness and solicitude that a great love can outpour. In her eyes he was the acme of perfection. She lived for him alone, and in every moment of his life it was her sole object to surround him with care and comfort, to assure his material well-being, to provide for him a never-failing solace when the cares of State became well-nigh unbearable.

Princess Bismarck made no secret of her affection; but it was more in her attitude towards everything which concerned Bismarck than in the active expressions of her lips that all Berlin knew of her devotion. Everyone, therefore, held her in sincere and lasting regard. Even among the most fashionable of society dames it would have been considered a *faux pas* to criticise the simplicity of her manner or her curious ideas on what constituted becoming attire. Her dresses really were most extraordinary at times, but never by any chance were they referred to in that malicious spirit in which such things are wont to be spoken of by those devotees of fashion who affect to criticise anything and everything that they see around them.

There is one other characteristic which I should like to refer to, and that is her prejudices. In common with so many Germans who have not been freed from the merely national outlook she had a very lively

hatred of the French. This at times had its reflex action upon Bismarck, and made his work more difficult, because his enemies would maintain that she imbibed her narrow-minded view from him. Bismarck, however, thoroughly understood her; he knew that this added difficulty he had occasionally to contend with was a limitation, and he was far too fond of her ever to give her pain by letting her know the thorns she unconsciously strewed upon his path. A more devoted husband or father it would be difficult to picture; his essentially affectionate nature made home life exceedingly congenial to him, and one can imagine the delight with which he snatched the all too brief opportunities of enjoying the sacred felicity of his fireside.

He was never too busy to take an interest in the affairs of his relatives, and the suffering of any one of them would cause him sincere concern.

Those who have been favoured with a knowledge of the correspondence between Bismarck and his wife will understand the charming sincerity of his domestic relations. It was no parade; he knew and appreciated with the whole depth of his nature the superior joys of a fireside life; he knew the rest that always awaited him in the bosom of his family. It will be no revelation to say that a man with such a nature must always prove a good friend, deeming nothing too irksome in the cause of friendship.

As time went on it must be admitted that his temperament suffered both through flattery and antagonism. He hated adulation and empty praise, and he grew in course of time unnecessarily impatient and

suspicious of commendation. He was sometimes unjust, too, to his opponents. His whole heart was centred in the progress and consolidation of the Empire. That was the object of his every move, and when those who differed from him in opinion did not realise that his almost brutal decisions were in reality far-seeing acts of brilliant diplomacy, he conceived that a personal antagonism actuated their opposition. In this he was often mistaken. When he discovered his error he was always generous, but his very sincerity of purpose sometimes obscured his judgment.

How much more could not one say of Bismarck? He was truly a man—the great man of his time. He was essential in the making of the Empire, but he was no ruthless despot. Rather should he go down in history as a kindly-hearted, fireside-loving man thrust by the exigencies of life into a position where the brilliant genius of his constructive power, the magnificent wideness of his imperial ideas, his wonderful knowledge of human nature, were forced out in the service of his country to make of him a patriot and a builder of Empire, the like of whom Europe has never seen.

CHAPTER XVI

COUNT VON MOLTKE AND A FEW MILITARY MEN

COUNT VON MOLTKE had been chief of Staff to my father-in-law at the time the latter was in command of an Army Corps at Magdeburg, and since that time he had always been on terms of great friendship with the whole Radziwill family. I was introduced to him almost immediately after my marriage, and he was extremely kind to me. It seems that I was like his wife, an Englishwoman who had died quite young, and whom he had passionately loved.

The Field-Marshal was a tall and lean old man, whose head was quite bald, and who used to wear a wig—which could not possibly be taken for anything else—mainly in order to prevent himself from catching cold. Moltke himself was the driest man I ever met in my life. His thoughts resembled a mathematical problem. He has been called in France "le grand silencieux," and in a certain sense he deserved the appellation. But he was something more than that; he was a great thinker, inexorable in his decisions, never giving his attention to anything else save what he considered to be his duty.

I do not think that he ever felt an emotion of any kind in his life, except the affection which he bore

his wife. He remained entirely unmoved on the day when, before the walls of Sedan, he discussed the conditions under which the French army had to capitulate. Certainly he rejoiced at the result, though only as at the solution of a problem at which he had worked for a long time. He exhibited not an atom of pride at the great deeds performed by the army which he commanded. To him the army was but a machine, and as such he had used it.

I do not know whether he was a great patriot, but I am certain that he was a man desirous of the triumph of his country over its foes, and who had worked untiringly to prepare and to assure that triumph. When its hour struck at last, it left him unmoved, because he could not feel any anxiety as to the issue of a struggle for which he knew that, thanks to him, Prussia was entirely and admirably prepared. He directed the army which he commanded with an impassivity of which few mortals would have been capable; and when, after the capitulation of Paris, William I. thanked him in grateful words for the part which he had had in the triumph of his armies, the Field-Marshal replied in a dry tone that "things could not have been otherwise, and that it was not he whom one had to thank, but all those who had obeyed the orders which he had given them."

In that phrase, which was perhaps the longest he ever uttered, he explained many things. Moltke was not one of those generals who inspire enthusiasm in their soldiers. He was not popular among his troops, but they respected him. They knew him to be always just, though inexorable whenever military discipline

was infringed, and they knew, too, that whilst under his orders they could not be defeated. It was mainly to this feeling, more than to anything else, that the Prussian army owed its incomparable triumphs. The Field-Marshal, though fond of the science of war, did not care for war itself. He knew that in those struggles which decide the fate of nations victory is sometimes harder to bear than defeat.

He was accused of wishing to attack France for a second time, but I do not think that the accusation was justified. He had far too much experience of war; and I am not sure whether the old warrior, in spite of his stiffness and of his sternness, was not, after all, more conscientious than Bismarck the diplomat, for whom no means were too bad for the achievement of his plans.

Still, despite his lack of emotionalism, Moltke was a man of violent likes and dislikes. One evening—it was the day after the death of Gambetta—I was dining with some friends in Berlin, and found myself placed next to Field-Marshal von Moltke at table. The conversation turned naturally to the event that had just taken place in France, and I asked him what he had thought when he heard of the death of the great orator. "I was extremely glad," he replied; "just as glad as I was when I heard about the death of Skobeleff."

I shall never forget the confusion of Moltke when I told him that the Russian general was a relative of mine.

The Field-Marshal was, before everything, a soldier, and diplomacy was an art that always remained unknown to him. On the other hand, his brother in arms

and rival—at least in honours and dignities—Marshal von Manteuffel, was essentially a diplomat, in spite of the military successes with which every step of his career was accompanied.

Baron von Manteuffel was the only man in Prussia who dared resist Prince Bismarck, and with whom the latter felt himself compelled to reckon. He remained for a few years in charge of the administration of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and he showed considerable tact in the fulfilment of a difficult duty. He was a cultured man, and possessed the rare gift of being able to look at things and at events through the eyes of others. His impartiality and sense of justice were quite extraordinary. When he was appointed governor of the conquered provinces, he was given almost unlimited powers, but used them only in a spirit of conciliation and moderation. He shut his eyes to all that he thought it was not necessary for him to see, and had a perfect understanding of the feelings of bitterness natural to those over whom he ruled. Though a fervent admirer of Prince Bismarck, he never sympathised with his methods, nor with the means which he used in order to attain his ends.

Marshal von Manteuffel would have been a great strength to any political party with which he had cared to ally himself, but one of his great qualities consisted in his constant refusal to lend his name to any political faction or party. He contented himself all his life with doing his duty as a soldier.

CHAPTER XVII

THE REICHSTAG AND ITS DIFFERENT PARTIES

IT was during the course of the year 1873 that the different German political parties began to assume the form which they have preserved more or less to the present day.

It was also about this time that an opposition, serious enough to embarrass Prince Bismarck, was organised against him. Bismarck, when he began his struggle against the Catholic clergy, imagined that it would win him the sympathies of the parliamentary faction which went by the name of "National Liberals." I think he made a mistake in that respect. The National Liberals, under the leadership of their head, Eugen Richter, found on the contrary a pretext to attack him in that struggle, and though he succeeded in winning them over to his side at the time when the famous Falk laws were presented to the Chambers, it is also certain that they did not become his friends.

Richter was a very clever man, and fully able to hold his own against the Chancellor. He was, moreover, a calmer man than the Chancellor, and did not bring personal animosities to bear against those whom he had occasion to attack. This gave the more weight to his acrid criticisms. His party was numerous, perfectly disciplined, and possessed many sympathies in

the country. Unfortunately, it too often made the mistake of being opportunist, and had procured the contempt of Prince Bismarck, whereby it lost the confidence of a number of its adherents. Nevertheless, it was considered as one of the most important parties in the Reichstag, and generally decided the fate of the bills under discussion.

Bismarck, though he detested Richter, nevertheless frequently made use of his influence, and often made concessions to him which other people would never have obtained. The Chancellor was quite aware that in every matter which involved the progress or the welfare of Germany, the patriotic feelings of the National Liberal party would lead them to support the Government. It was principally for this reason that Bismarck succeeded in keeping the majority which he wanted, and which he contrived to gather together through the coalition of the Conservatives with the followers of the man he most detested, Eugen Richter.

The latter, for his part, knew perfectly well how to profit by the exigencies of the situation, and succeeded in his turn in obtaining the help of the Government in a good many questions he had at heart. The National Liberals always set conditions to their acquiescence in any governmental measure. The Conservatives, on the other hand, followed blindly any instructions which the Wilhelmstrasse chose to give them.

This group was mostly composed of large landowners and of members of the highest aristocracy of the country. The Princes of Hatzfeld de Trachenberg, Carolath-Beuthen, Pless, and Hohenlohe, the

Dukes of Ratibor and Ujest, the Counts of Hochberg and Henckel, who all had seats in the Prussian Upper House, were also deputies in the Reichstag of the Empire; they largely constituted the majority upon which the Government could always rely, and which it knew very well would remain loyal. It was a party that was submissive to the rulers of the country, but not disciplined. It sedulously sought its own interests and its own advantages, and they were pecuniary. The Chancellor, therefore, though he was certain that it would always support him and his policy, had neither confidence nor esteem for it, and treated it without the least consideration or respect.

The Centre or Catholic party constituted the only serious adversary in the path of Bismarck, and he never ceased to struggle against it. That party had one immense advantage: it possessed for leaders men of the highest merit, eloquent orators, and most able politicians. Dr. Mallinckrodt, who was at its head for a long time, was a brilliant speaker, perhaps the only man in the whole Centre party who clearly understood and properly appreciated the new political system which was inaugurated when the new German Empire was proclaimed at Versailles. His convictions were always sincere, and not like those of Dr. Windhorst, for instance, subordinated to dynastic considerations or to personal sympathies.

Unfortunately, Mallinckrodt died at a relatively early age, at the very moment when his political influence was at its height, and when his reputation for moderation began to be known everywhere, and to be appreciated even by his political enemies. After death

had removed him from the political arena there remained no one capable of taking the place which he had filled so worthily except Dr. Windhorst, the former Minister of the late King George of Hanover. Windhorst, however, had the disadvantage of mixing his Guelph sympathies in all the questions which he was obliged to discuss. His ambition was colossal, and his secret desire was to obtain the portfolio of a Prussian Minister, notwithstanding his Hanoverian associations. He was a marvellous political tactician and an unrivalled orator. He transformed the Centre into a disciplined force, drilled it into absolute obedience, and never allowed the personal hesitations or scruples of his followers to interfere with his plans.

It is likely that if he had been in the place of Prince Bismarck he would have shown himself far more authoritative than the Chancellor himself, because this small man had attacks of impatience which were almost humorous. He never allowed any of his decisions to be discussed; he never admitted that one of his partisans could vote otherwise than he had ordered him to do. I have more than once witnessed his rage when some undisciplined member of his party dared to utter an opinion different from the one which he had professed. He was most amusing to watch at such moments; he threw up his small hands, brushed aside his solitary lock of hair, and gave unrestrained sway to his rage.

I remember once having witnessed in the corridors of the Reichstag a discussion between Windhorst and a Socialist deputy. The latter was uneasy about rumours which were circulating at the time of a

reconciliation between the Roman Curia and the German Government, and he was asking the leader of the Centre whether, in case this reconciliation took place, the Socialists could still reckon on the support which the Catholics had up to then given them. "You would probably be on the side of the Government against us," he added sadly. "I?" retorted Windhorst. "Why do you wish me to support a Government of which I am not a member?"

At this time the Reichstag possessed no disinterested or honest leaders, and, with few exceptions, no members capable of appreciating the importance of their position. The Chancellor despised the Assembly, and he was right to do so. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that Bismarck allowed these men, who were dwarfs in comparison with himself, to annoy him, and still more that he did not hide it from them. He would have saved himself much trouble had he only been able to control his temper and to avoid unnecessary quarrels which were harmful to his dignity as well as to that of the Reichstag.

At the time when the Chancellor inaugurated the anti-Russian policy which he followed for awhile, and wanted to expel all foreign subjects living within a certain distance from the frontier, he took steps which excited an immense amount of indignation. The measure was eagerly seized upon by Dr. Windhorst and his party in order to bring about a motion of censure in the Reichstag against the Chancellor, and to challenge the legality of his conduct. Public opinion, of course, sided against the Minister, and the day upon which the measure was to be discussed was eagerly

awaited. It was known that several members of the Bundesrath or Federal Council were strongly opposed to the application of the Imperial ordinance with which the unpopular measure had been heralded. The debate, which was expected would follow upon the proposal of Dr. Windhorst to remonstrate with the Government as to the illegality of the proceedings taken, was looked forward to with lively interest, and on the day when it took place I do not believe there was even standing room in any of the galleries of the Reichstag. I arrived early, so as to get a good seat in the diplomatic box, where I generally went to listen to the debates.

We had not to wait very long before Prince Bismarck, followed by all the members of the Bundesrath, entered the House. He walked to the tribune, and waited until the first deputy whose name was down on the list of speakers advanced towards it. Then, quietly brushing him aside with a gesture of his left hand, he ascended himself, and slowly taking a paper out of his pocket and turning his bulky figure so that one could see he was addressing himself to the President more than to the deputies, over whose heads he looked with absolute disdain: "I have a gracious message from His Majesty to communicate to the House," he said. He then proceeded to read its contents. These were brief enough, and simply stated that the Emperor, having been apprised of the intention of the Reichstag to discuss certain measures he had taken in his quality of King of Prussia, saw fit to remind the House that, as King of Prussia, he was an independent Sovereign, responsible for his

actions only before the Prussian Houses of Legislature, and that the Reichstag of the Empire had no right to challenge them.

A dead silence was their reply to this communication, and it would be next to impossible to describe the consternation that fell upon the assembled House. Prince Bismarck folded the paper slowly and walked down the steps of the tribune. Midway he stopped, and addressed himself once more to the President: "I suppose the House will thank His Majesty for his gracious communication to it," he said, and the most ironical of smiles flitted over his usually impassive face. Then, without turning round to look at the unfortunate victims whom he had so ruthlessly crushed, he turned and went out of the House.

The Socialists had not at that time obtained the great successes which they achieved a few years later, when their party became so powerful that the Government was compelled to consider it as a deciding factor, or almost so, in any resolutions put forward. During the reign of the Emperor William I. the number of their deputies never exceeded fourteen. Nevertheless, their party attracted much attention, as well as its leader, the famous Bebel, who died last year. The latter possessed singular eloquence, and not only understood how to impress the masses, but also to shake the opinions and judgments of his political adversaries.

It was not possible to listen with indifference to Bebel when he was speaking on the miseries of suffering humanity, and one had the intuition that he was telling the truth, and not trying to rouse the pity of

his audience upon imaginary woes. When he was appealing to the feelings of justice and humanity of the German people, and imploring it not to allow some of its children to be made outlaws on account of their political opinions, one could not help thinking of those prophets of old whom the Bible tells us were aware of the punishments which would be dealt in the hereafter to all those who had forgotten the orders of their Lord in this life. Bebel was essentially an idealist, and this constituted perhaps his greatest strength, and allowed him to keep his influence over the working population of the Empire. He was a demagogue, but he was also a man of order, who detested anarchy and repudiated its doctrine. In his opinion liberty stood above everything else, except the German Fatherland; and whilst he was continually fighting against Prince Bismarck, he was nevertheless ready to become, at need, one of the soldiers enlisted under his banner.

He never used his eloquence in order to excite the evil passions of the crowd. He was a first-rate organiser and a rigid disciplinarian. He never allowed his partisans to discuss the orders which he issued, and exacted from them the same obedience a general requires from his soldiers. He ruled his party with an iron hand, and drilled it into an absolute submission not only to his directions, but also to his thoughts. In this he imitated the great Minister against whom he never ceased fighting so long as the latter remained the supreme ruler of German politics.

Bebel remained the soul of the Socialist party for many years. When, later, new men came forward, the

old veteran began to lose some of his importance in the eyes of his former partisans, whilst new members of the party regarded him as a relic of the past rather than as a chief likely to lead his followers to victory. The ideas preconised by Bebel have served their time in Germany, and I cannot help thinking that he himself must have more than once deplored the transformation manifest in the opinions of the generation which replaced his own. Nevertheless, his removal from the political scene will always leave a void in the Reichstag, where he caused his party to be respected. Respect is not the feeling which Socialism inspires to-day in Germany.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

DIPLOMACY used to play a very important part in social life at the time of my marriage. Both the Emperor and the Empress were extremely gracious to the representatives which the foreign Courts sent to Berlin; and the Ambassadors, as well as the Ministers who resided in the Prussian capital, found themselves the objects of flattering attention. The Embassies, too, opened their doors to Berlin society; and invitations to the balls which Lord Russell, the English Ambassador, and Count Karolyi, the Austrian representative, used to give each winter were sought after with particular eagerness.

Lord Odo Russell, who was later known as Lord Ampthill, was one of the most distinguished of all British diplomats. Those who met him will remember to this day his unfailing tact and ability. During his long sojourn in the German capital he contrived to remain always upon the best and most cordial terms with Prince Bismarck, and at the same time, though it may sound remarkable, the most trusted friend, of the Crown Prince and Princess. In politics his knowledge was as wide as it was deep, and his appreciation of the world in which he lived and moved was perfectly wonderful. He was never at fault in

anything he undertook to do, and never felt embarrassed, no matter in what difficult position his duties involved him.

He was married to one of the daughters of Lord Clarendon, who had held the post of Foreign Secretary during the reign of Queen Victoria, and he found in her a companion fully worthy of him and a helpmeet devoted as well as discerning, whose charm contributed a good deal to his own successes. Berlin, I think, has never possessed a diplomat of Lord Odo's ability, nor one more thoroughly popular in society. I have never ceased to regret that death carried him away before the Emperor Frederick's illness, for I feel certain that, had he been still alive, many of the regrettable incidents which occurred at that time would have been avoided.

The lovely Countess Fanny Karolyi, the wife of the Austrian Ambassador, was a wonderful hostess, and delighted in entertaining. Her husband, however, did not always share her tastes in this respect, though during the time that the Berlin Congress lasted, her house served as a meeting-place for all the foreign plenipotentiaries who had gathered in the German capital.

Russia at that time was represented by Baron d'Oubril, an amiable little man, who appeared but little in society after the tragic death of his wife, who was drowned whilst bathing in one of the lakes near Potsdam. The Baron enjoyed the reputation of being a very able diplomat, but he belonged to an old school, and could not quite accommodate himself to the system introduced by Bismarck.

After the Congress he retired, and his place was taken up by M. Sabouroff, who very soon quarrelled with the Chancellor. In fact, the relations between the Berlin Cabinet and that of St. Petersburg became and remained more and more strained, until the appointment of Count Paul Schouvaloff, whose tact and diplomatic knowledge succeeded in re-establishing on its former footing the old and traditional intimacy which had existed between the Royal House of Prussia and the Imperial House of Russia.

Italy, whose legation was raised about this time to the dignity of an embassy, was represented by Count de Launay, a clever and charming man, though unfortunately his wife, an exceedingly cultured woman, was almost stone deaf.

The Belgian and Prussian Royal Families had always been upon intimate terms, and this intimacy had been strengthened by the marriage of the Princess Marie of Hohenzollern with the Count of Flanders, the brother of King Leopold. The Belgian representative was Baron Nothomb, a statesman of high standing and great experience, who had played a considerable part in the recent history of his country previous to the election to its throne of the Saxe-Coburg dynasty. The Baron and his wife entertained very often, and their weekly receptions were attended by everybody of note in Berlin, in spite of their dullness and solemnity. The Baron was a great favourite with Prince Bismarck, who often confided political secrets to him and discussed them with him. This prerogative assured the Belgian representative a special position among his colleagues.

France was represented by Vicomte de Gontaut Biron. He had been entrusted with the difficult task of renewing diplomatic relations with the German Court after the war of 1870, relations which had been interrupted for almost two years. The Vicomte was an accomplished man of the world, with the courteous manners characteristic of the select society among which his lot was cast. His patriotism was above suspicion, but his intelligence was not above the average, nor was he strong enough to hold his own in presence of Prince Bismarck, whom, moreover, he had the misfortune to offend on the very day of his arrival at Berlin.

M. de Gontaut Biron had ties of relationship in Germany. He was allied to the Duke de Sagan and to my sister-in-law, and he made the mistake of trying to use them in order to consolidate his official position. He took pains to get into the good books of the Empress Augusta, and of her maid, Mlle. von Neumdorff, but unfortunately failed to realise that, although his social standing was becoming firmer every day, his political one was getting more compromised daily on that very account. Gossip soon represented him as being in a state of open hostility to the Chancellor, and after the false rumours about a renewed attack on France that were put into circulation during the spring of 1875, his position in Berlin became quite impossible.

His successor was the Count de St. Vallier, one of the ablest diplomats that France possessed at that time. The Count became one of my closest friends, and long after his death I remained on most affection-

ate terms with his old parents, the Marquis and the Marquise de St. Vallier, whom I used to visit every autumn at their historic home, the castle of Coucy les Eppes.

Berlin, during the time that I lived there, was the political centre of the world, and I thus had an opportunity to become acquainted with the most famous diplomats then alive. During the Congress that followed upon the conclusion of the peace of San Stefano between Russia and Turkey, I got to know Lord Beaconsfield (Disraeli, as some people still persisted in calling him), and I must own to have fallen entirely under his charm. As a Russian I was naturally prejudiced against him. He represented to my imagination the incarnation of everything that was bad, mischievous and destructive; and before ever I knew him I detested him as a *parvenu*, and a man to whom my country had owed some of its bitterest humiliations. But when I became acquainted with him all my prejudices melted like snow in springtime. A more fascinating man than Lord Beaconsfield never breathed. From the first moment of introduction one understood the reason of his numerous successes, and accepted them as something quite natural. He possessed that great charm which belongs only to people possessing the utmost confidence in their own individuality and in their personal strength. He was imbued, too, with the consciousness of the power which he wielded, as well as an inbred certainty that he would always succeed in doing what he wanted. His conversation was a joy to listen to, for he had a dry manner of saying the most funny things that was

quite inimitable, and, thanks to his profound knowledge of the world, he never committed the error of relating an anecdote before those by whom it would not have been appreciated. He knew well the diplomatic value of flattery, and administered it with tact and discernment. He was fond of contradicting people, but only to give them the pleasure of thinking they had converted him to their own opinions. A lady reminding him once of a discussion which they had had, added, "I still think that I was right." "My dear lady," replied Dizzy, "you could never be wrong."

Lord Beaconsfield liked what the French call "les coups de théâtre." I think that he never enjoyed anything more than the thunderbolt which startled the world when it heard of his secret treaty with Russia concerning Batoum, and with Turkey concerning the cession of Cyprus to England. I remember meeting him on that day at a reception given by Countess Karolyi. He walked quietly into the room with a sphinx-like expression on his face, and I could not help asking him what he was thinking of. "I am not thinking," he replied; "I am enjoying myself."

The Hungarian uniform worn by Count Andrassy attracted much attention during the Berlin Congress. In the first place, the Count, after having been sentenced to death by his Sovereign, had become his Prime Minister. But apart from that, he was an extremely brilliant man and a very able diplomat. He had an extraordinary talent for coming out of a difficult position with advantage, but I doubt if he possessed that broad outlook or prevision which, seeking advantage in the future, does not hesitate to sacri-

fice the present in order to attain it. Had he been in the place of Bismarck, for instance, he would have marched on Vienna after the victory of Sadowa.

I doubt if Berlin is as interesting to-day as in those early days. The German Empire has now organised itself; but when I arrived at the Court of William I., Germany was still busy getting into her new place in Europe. Old manners and customs have now disappeared, together with the small, narrow, and unwholesome houses of half a century ago. But does this mean that one feels happier in the big barracks which grace the principal streets of Berlin to-day? Even the old cathedral, where Prussian monarchs used to worship, and where they slept their last, has been done away with, and replaced by a new church. Everything has been transformed—the men as well as their customs. And the few people who still remember the good old times begin to ask themselves whether, after all, they were not a dream.

CHAPTER XIX

PRINCE VON HOHENLOHE AND PRINCE VON BÜLOW

I KNEW Prince Clovis von Hohenlohe and Prince von Bülow very well indeed. The former was a statesman without being a politician. He was too much of a *grand seigneur* to care for politics in the sense of a career, for they could add nothing to his fame; they gave nothing in exchange for the labour they would cost. But Prince von Hohenlohe was a sincere patriot, and sacrificed much to his love for his native country. He was courteous, kind, sincere, and incapable of effecting any compromise with his conscience as Prince Bismarck so often did.

He became Chancellor of the German Empire at a critical time, succeeding General Caprivi on the very day of the death of the Emperor Alexander III. of Russia. It was felt, however, throughout the whole of Germany that his assumption of the post entrusted to him by the Emperor was a guarantee of peace, and that his vast experience would prove a restraining influence in any complications that might arise.

Prince Hohenlohe was perhaps the most respected personality in Germany at this time. He had given proofs of his high integrity; and it would have been impossible to find a better guide for his Sovereign, with whom, by the way, he was connected by marriage,

the mother of the present Empress being Princess of Hohenlohe.

Prince Clovis was a small man, whose figure was slightly bent even in his young days. He spoke softly, he moved softly, and gave one the impression of being a very highly cultured person, which indeed he was. His was not a warlike spirit, and if all that is related can be believed, he tried to imbue the Emperor with his own personal horror of war. He had a keen insight, and observed humanity as closely and as well as he observed events, with the result that no one had a better knowledge of the secret history of Europe.

Prince Hohenlohe had no personal ambition, no love for popularity, and no desire for the approval of the masses. He was in no sense the man of his time, but he succeeded in imposing himself, as well as his opinions and ideas, on those who belonged to it.

In his administration of the affairs of the Empire he showed the same wisdom he had displayed in Alsace-Lorraine, and as German Ambassador in Paris, where he contrived to smooth away many difficulties and to relieve the tension caused by the Franco-German war.

When he retired from office it was regretted everywhere, and perhaps even more abroad than in his own country.

As for Prince von Bülow, he was a very different type of man and perhaps less conscientious. Though he cared more for personal matters than Prince Clovis, he cared less how events affected his own future, being a gambler who had taught himself how to lose as well as

how to win. Few people have fallen from a high position with more philosophy, or have given up political life with more equanimity. But then the mind of Prince von Bülow was able to rise above the petty things of life; he knew too well his own intellectual worth to feel hurt at the crowd's lack of appreciation. In his Roman retreat, under the shade of the old trees of the Villa Malta, he has cause to remember with pride, but without regret, those distant days when he held the direction of German politics in the hollow of his hand.

Prince Bülow is a very clever man—this is a fact generally admitted. Yet with all the opportunities he has had to achieve great things, he has somehow missed doing so. His activity, great as it was, has proved barren, and he is remembered by the German public less than are General Caprivi or Prince Hohenlohe, to whom he was vastly superior in intellect.

As a man of the world, Prince Bülow was one of the pleasantest gentlemen it has ever been my fortune to know. He was well read, had charming manners, a very keen, observing eye, whilst his sarcasms were delightful. There was, perhaps, a shade of affectation in the way he had of talking about intellectual subjects; but I think that this was more the fault of the surroundings amid which he had spent his early youth than that of his character or temperament. At the time he entered society there existed in Berlin a certain small coterie in which he found himself entangled, for whom Wagner was as a god and Schopenhauer was considered as his prophet. Bülow, or young Bülow as one used to call him at

the time, fell entirely under the influence of this coterie, and began talking as well and as much as did other members of this circle about the theories of the Frankfurt philosopher. In this direction he displayed his marvellous power of assimilation. He had a knack all his own of adroitly avoiding subjects upon which he did not feel quite sure, and, too, an easy way of evading the revelation of what he really believed or thought about any particular topic.

With ladies Bülow was very popular. Men liked him less, but he was a great favourite with Prince Bismarck, who appreciated his many and varied abilities. And all the time he was himself paying court to the Chancellor he never lost an opportunity of studying the latter, or of keeping an eye upon his political line of conduct, in view of the day when he might find himself called to become the successor of that great man.

Once, when he still held the position of secretary at the St. Petersburg Embassy, under General von Schweinitz, I asked him casually whether he would care to come back one day to the big northern capital in the character of an Ambassador. He replied at once that he would never become that, but he might one day fill the place which his father had occupied, and which then belonged to Count Paul Hatzfeld—that of Foreign Secretary. He did not go so far as to say that he might become Chancellor, but I am sure he had it in his mind.

Prince Bülow was born under a lucky star, but perhaps the luckiest thing which happened to him was his marriage with the beautiful and distinguished

woman who bears his name at the present day. Princess von Bülow, who is an Italian by birth, has had the best of influences over her husband, and since he married her he has lost a good deal of his former affectation.

The secret of the influence the Princess has with him lies in the fact that she knows how to keep the mind of her husband employed, and has directed its activity towards artistic and scientific subjects, thus preventing him from mourning the loss of power. Husband and wife are both fond of their Roman home, and the Princess, owing to the fact that she is the stepdaughter of the distinguished statesman M. Minghetti, holds an exceptional position at the Italian Court. Her house has become a centre for the intellectual society of Rome, and sometimes—very seldom though—the Prince allows himself to forget his role as a modern Cincinnatus, and to express an opinion as to politics which otherwise he affects to have quite forgotten.

But one thing he regrets. Though he managed to overcome many of the prejudices entertained against him in various quarters, he could never mould the Emperor William II. to his way of thinking, nor induce him to follow the lead which he desired him to take. This is the only crumpled rose-leaf that disturbs his slumbers. He realises it now, and he regrets it the more, that he had allowed certain people whom he knew well to guess that his secret ambition was to replace Prince Bismarck at the side of the third German Emperor.

William II., after having liked him extremely, soon grew very impatient with him, and resented the authori-

tative manner the Prince assumed at times. When later he made his famous speech in the Reichstag, promising that the Emperor would never more indulge in public manifestations of his opinions without having first consulted his Chancellor or the responsible head of his government, he mortally offended the Sovereign, who from that day waited for the first opportunity to dispense with the services of a man who had forgotten to be grateful for the favours he had lavished upon him.

William II. did not have to wait long. The day soon dawned when Prince von Bülow had to retire from public life, and was made to feel that there was no forgiveness for him. The Emperor William II. is not a man to forget or to forgive. But Prince Bülow has no wish for a *revanche ;* he is quite happy among his roses, looking from the height of his Villa Malta on the glories of " Roma Aeterna," where he has found a rest that his native country, had he remained in it, would never have afforded him.

Let us leave him there, a philosopher who has never studied philosophy ; a statesman who perhaps has reason to feel thankful to the circumstances that have removed him from the political arena.

CHAPTER XX

PRINCESS VICTORIA

I HAVE deliberately abstained from referring earlier to the Empress Victoria. My respect for her memory compels me to write of her with reverence and at some length.

The Empress has never been given the place in history which she deserves to occupy. Few personalities have been so bitterly discussed as that of the consort of Frederick III., and too often judged without impartiality.

Victoria Adelaide Mary Louisa was born in London, at Buckingham Palace, on November 21st, 1840, and was the first child of the marriage of Queen Victoria with Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg. She received almost immediately after her birth the title of Princess Royal of Great Britain and Ireland, and under that name she was always thought of in England.

From her earliest childhood she was the object of her father's special affection, and he watched with the utmost care over her education.

Gifted with the rarest qualities of heart and mind, she was very soon the pride of her parents and the idol of her country. In her letters to her uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, Queen Victoria constantly spoke of " Vicky," as the young Princess was called at home,

and related the progress she had been making in her studies. The Queen brought up her numerous children to be strictly obedient; indeed she was almost more a Queen than a mother to them. Prince Albert, on the contrary, liked to be familiar with his children, and established an intimacy with the Princess Royal closer than that generally existing between father and daughter.

The Prince more than once found himself in a false and delicate position on account of the susceptibilities of the British, who feared the possible influence he might exercise over the Queen, and through her over English politics. The situation led him often to say that the position of a husband to a reigning Queen reminded him of that of the Consort of a King, except that it had none of its advantages.

It was under the influence of the difficulties of his personal position that Prince Albert, unknown perhaps to himself, tried to train his eldest daughter to become a companion likely to be helpful to a Sovereign. Truly German in his heart and sympathies, Prince Albert had remained German also in his habits and tastes; and he liked to think that his daughter would become in time a German Sovereign, and take to her new country a knowledge of English methods of government, the superiority of which he frankly admitted. Accordingly he spent a great deal of time teaching his daughter kingcraft and other subjects that did not, at that time, form part of feminine education.

When the Queen went to Paris to see the Emperor Napoleon III. in the year 1855, she was accompanied

by the Prince Consort, the Prince of Wales, and the Princess Royal.

It was then that the latter made her debut, and she always remembered all the details of this memorable visit. A few months later she was betrothed to Prince Frederick William of Prussia.

Her marriage was the realisation of one of the dearest and most secret wishes of the Prince Consort, who for a long time past had been working for it with his friend and adviser, Baron Stockmar. Both men were pietists by nature, and ever since the birth of the Princess Royal they had nursed the secret desire to see the two greatest Protestant dynasties in Europe united by matrimony. Nevertheless, it is to be doubted whether these desires would have been gratified without the sympathy and the affection that the Princess Victoria and the future Emperor Frederick felt for each other.

A letter from Queen Victoria has given us details of this sweet love idyll, which developed so rapidly that the betrothal of the young couple, although it had been decided to keep it secret for a year, had to be announced at once, owing to the impatience of the Prince, who, whilst on an excursion with the family of his future wife in the Highlands of Scotland, gathered some white heather and offered it to the Princess as a token of his love.

More than twenty years later, the Crown Prince of Germany, while talking to me at a ball in the old Castle of Berlin, told me himself of this episode, and took the opportunity to speak of the deep love and affection that he had always felt for his wife.

"She has been the guardian angel of my existence," he said; "and she has helped me to bear all its sorrows and dark hours. She is perfection itself as a woman."

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp in the private chapel of St. James's Palace, in London, and a few days later the young bride took leave of her parents and family, and, accompanied by the regrets as well as by the best wishes of the whole of England, started for her new home.

She was received in Germany with much enthusiasm, and it seemed at first that she would quickly gain the love of the country that had become her own. Unfortunately, things turned out differently. The Princess, though not at all spoiled under her mother's roof, was too young to fully realise that the secret of Royal success consists in always smiling, whatever the circumstances. She felt bewildered, as young brides do when forced to undergo a change of country and surroundings, and she did not understand how to hide her feelings from others.

Then, before she could assemble her surprised and startled thoughts she found herself confronted by the imposing figure of her mother-in-law, the Princess of Prussia, who was to become later the Empress Augusta, a woman of domineering manner, eager for influence, entirely devoid of tact, and who neither could nor would enter into the sufferings of the child who had been brought so suddenly into her family circle.

Thrown back upon her own resources, thwarted in all her youthful ambitions, reminded at every step that England as well as its customs ought to be

forgotten by her, and that the only thing which she had the right to remember was that she was a Prussian, and the wife of a Prussian Prince, the Princess Victoria began to shun the world, and sought in study the strength to accomplish the duties that, according to human probabilities, were soon to become hers. She then conceived the noble plan of helping her husband to govern the country over which one day he would be called upon to reign according to constitutional principles, such as she had seen displayed in England. She forgot, in her inexperience, that what is possible in one country is often not practicable in another.

Scarcely one year after her marriage she wrote a memorandum concerning the duties of a constitutional monarch, which Lord Clarendon described as one of the most remarkable things he had ever read. This memorandum was sent to Prince Albert, but unfortunately it became too much talked about, and it awakened the first symptoms of distrust against the young Princess. People began to say that she was meddling too much in politics and trying to influence her husband in a direction contrary to the traditions of the House of Hohenzollern.

When, a few years after her marriage, the death of the King Frederick William IV. transformed her into a Crown Princess, that feeling of distrust grew in proportion to the importance of her present and future position. Princess Victoria was accused of being too English in her tastes and sympathies, of bringing up her children according to English principles, and trying to implant English customs in Berlin. Later on,

when King William appointed Bismarck as President of the Council of Ministers, a regrettable struggle began between the latter and the Crown Prince—a struggle which reached its culminating point at the time of the famous Dantzig incident, which very few people outside Germany remember now.

The first serious conflict that arose between the King and the Crown Prince happened in the year 1863, when William I., in conjunction with Bismarck, inaugurated that system of government which was to bring Prussia to its later state of greatness and change the whole map of Europe.

A Royal decree limiting the liberty of the press had been published, and under the inspiration of the Crown Princess, who was indignant at a measure that shocked her English feelings of liberty, the Prince, who had then just started on a voyage of inspection in Eastern Prussia, wrote to the King from Dantzig and expressed his disapprobation of the measure, complaining that he had not been asked to participate in the discussions that had taken place in the Council of State concerning it.

On the 5th of June there was a reception in the town hall of Dantzig, and amongst other things which he said in reply to the address of welcome presented to him by the burgomaster, the Crown Prince made use of the following imprudent expression: "I regret to have come here at a moment when a serious disaccord, the news of which has surprised me greatly, has occurred between the government and the country. I was away. I have taken no part in the deliberations that have led to such a result."

These words, uttered by the Heir to the Throne, produced everywhere a deep impression, which was further strengthened by an energetic protest against the decree limiting the freedom until then enjoyed by the press which he sent to the Ministry of State. The King wrote his son a very angry letter. The latter replied requesting to be relieved from his military functions, and to be allowed to retire from public life with the Princess and his children.

It was then that Bismarck intervened. He succeeded in calming the King and in making the Crown Prince understand the necessity of submitting willingly to that fundamental principle of the Prussian constitution, which asserts that there is no place in Prussia for opposition on the part of the Heir to the Crown.

It may seem strange that it was Bismarck who preached moderation, who did all he possibly could to end this conflict between father and son. The conflict, no doubt, was aggravated by an article in *The Times*, which congratulated the Crown Prince upon having a wife who not only shared his liberal opinions, but who was also capable of being a great help to him in an important and critical moment in his life.

I mention this article, as well as the incident of Dantzig, as it was called at the time, because it was from that moment that the accusation of being so thoroughly an Englishwoman, and of trying to persuade her husband to govern Prussia according to the principles of the English constitution, was first launched in a most positive manner against the Crown Princess.

The article in *The Times* did her much harm, and she was accused openly of having inspired it. Bismarck, however, who frankly disliked her, at once understood that the Crown Princess would have been incapable of using the medium of a newspaper in order to sing her own praises. He was also aware that she had too deep a feeling of her own dignity as heiress to a throne to have had anything to do with such a vulgar glorification of her person. Thus, when the King accused his daughter-in-law of having inspired the article, he did his best to destroy the misapprehension of the aged monarch, and, but for his intervention, a serious quarrel would have taken place between the Sovereign and his heir. The Crown Prince recognised this fact, and never forgot the service which his father's Minister had rendered him at that critical hour of his life. Like a true Hohenzollern, moreover, he showed his gratitude subsequently by giving his support to the Chancellor of the new Empire on some occasions when the latter found himself at variance with the Sovereign.

In 1866, when King William refused his consent to the conclusion of peace with Austria after the victory of Sadowa, and wanted to march upon Vienna, a measure Bismarck considered dangerous, it was the Crown Prince who finally persuaded his father to follow his great Minister's advice.

"As I see that my President of the Council abandons me in presence of the enemy," wrote William I., "and as I am not able to find here anyone to take his place, I have discussed the question with my son. He has rallied himself to the opinion of the President

of the Council, and I find myself obliged, to my utmost sorrow and grief, after the brilliant victories won by the army, to swallow this bitter pill and to accept a shameful peace."

The period of the war with Austria was a brilliant one in the life of the Crown Prince. He revealed himself as an able general, and the laurels which he had won at Königgrätz proclaimed him a national hero. The Crown Princess also, through the care that she took of the wounded and sick, through her activity in the cause of charity, and through her utter unselfishness, recovered some of the popularity she had lost.

She herself also changed; she became acquainted with the seriousness of life, and softened by her contact with suffering. The death of her father was the first cruel blow to shake her serenity. It taught her that human happiness is, like life itself, but fleeting; whilst the sudden end of her third son, who died whilst his father was away fighting in the Austrian war, was a shock under which the Crown Princess nearly succumbed.

The letters which she wrote at that time to her family and her friends are heartrending to read; and she could not resign herself for many years to her loss. Her lady-in-waiting and faithful friend, Countess Hedwig Brühl, told me that she was quite surprised when she first saw the Princess dressed again in a coloured frock; and the way in which she told me of this incident conveyed to me how dearly she loved her Royal mistress.

After the events of 1866 the Crown Prince spent even more time in his home than formerly. He and

Victoria F. Pr. Pr. Pr.

Berlin d. 25. Januar 1883.

EMPRESS FREDERICK OF PRUSSIA.

his wife devoted themselves largely to the education of their children, though they varied the monotony of life by frequent journeys abroad and by entertaining their few really intimate friends. At this time, moreover, the Princess began to enjoy a greater independence, and tried to gather round her a circle whose tastes were in sympathy with her own, though she still occupied herself with political matters in a quiet, unobtrusive manner. The war of 1870, however, completely changed the life of the Royal couple.

No one deplored it more than did Prince Frederick William. He hated the idea of witnessing again the bloody scenes that had so painfully impressed themselves upon his mind in 1866, and, in addition, was fully aware of the importance of the struggle, and of the consequences it was bound to have on the future of his country.

His father consented only after long hesitation to accept the Imperial Crown. The Crown Prince, however, did not share this aversion to the inheritance of Charles the Great. On the contrary, he was quite ready to see himself the Sovereign of a confederated Germany; but his nature was too earnest and too deep not to look with fear and dread upon a struggle, the results of which would be either to make the country forget at least the disaster of Jena, or else to humiliate it once more before the descendants of the Corsican adventurer, in whose presence Queen Louisa had wept at Tilsit.

The Crown Princess shared the feelings of her Consort, but being also a woman with a womanly heart, she could not but be proud of the new laurels

that he was about to win. She retained a passionate adoration for the man whose destiny she had been called upon to share; she tried to give his every thought preference to her own with a persistence that was wonderful in a nature so strong as hers; she thought only of him, and she was proud of but one thing—of being his wife. Full of hope for the future, she longed for the day when she would wear a crown, because she would then have the joy of seeing him in possession of her ambitions; and if sometimes she showed impatience, it was not because she wanted to become an Empress, as people have said, but because she longed for the whole world to know her husband as she knew him—a wise, enlightened ruler, living only for the welfare and the happiness of his people.

When she came to meet him after the triumphs of 1870, bringing with her that same laurel crown which she was later on to lay on his death-bed, there was such an expression of joy on her face that the Prince took her in his arms and cried: "Vicky, you love me as well as you did at Balmoral!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE PERSONALITY OF THE CROWN PRINCESS VICTORIA

I WAS presented to the Crown Princess of Germany in November, 1873, a few weeks after my first marriage. She received me and my mother-in-law in her study, in the palace which she occupied in Berlin, and which is now the residence of her grandson, the heir to the Prussian Throne. The Court was in mourning for Queen Elizabeth, the widow of Frederick William IV., and the crêpe veil which the Princess was wearing did not allow me to see her well. But later, when I knew her better, I learned to guess the riddle of her beautiful eyes, whose expression was quite indescribable.

The Princess, though not a great conversationalist, knew how to find the right words at the right time. She was intensely sympathetic, and, despite the magnificence and grandeur which hemmed in her life, found time to interest herself in the sorrows and afflictions of those around her. Always kind and indulgent, she learned not to judge others harshly. Given to the highest thoughts, occupied by the noblest interests, absorbed by the most generous plans for the future, she disdained the plaudits of the crowd, and with equal serenity ignored its injustices. She lived in a

world entirely her own, where charity, art, literature, and science reigned supreme. Her voice was wonderful in its harmony; it was soft and clear, and she had a happy knack of conveying to the mind of her listeners the exact impression she wished to give.

I remember one day, towards the end of the life of the Empress when I was with her in Berlin, that our conversation fell upon someone who had offended her in the past, and I was rather surprised to find that her judgments concerning that person had become modified, and that she even spoke of her with some sympathy. I could not help making a remark to that effect to Her Majesty, who then put her hand on my arm as if to command my attention: "Let us forget the past," she said. "You remember the epitaph in Westminster Abbey, 'Nescire et errare humanum est.' I have come to the conclusion that this is the only judgment we have the right to utter."

When the triumphs that attended the Franco-German war had given King William the crown of Charles the Great and of Barbarossa, the politics of Prussia, which had become those of the German Empire, naturally underwent a radical change. When I arrived at Berlin the new Empire had just begun, and Prince Bismarck dominated the whole scene. His relations with the Heir to the Throne had for a short time been cordial, but now again became strained. Bismarck accused both the Crown Prince and the Princess of joining in intrigues against him. At that time the French Ambassador, the Viscount de Gontaut Biron, was the soul of a small coterie distinctly hostile to Bismarck, but owing to family ties he was received

both by the Empress Augusta and by the Crown Prince. The German Chancellor, therefore, elected to vent his ire upon the latter.

A rather bitter correspondence followed, and though it was easy for the Prince to prove to Bismarck that his suspicions were unfounded, the Chancellor continued to regard the future Emperor with mistrust, and for a long time would have nothing to say or to do with him. Some advances that were made to him by the Crown Princess, who did not care to be on bad terms with the all-powerful Minister, were repulsed, and the misunderstanding only came to an end owing to the intervention of a mutual friend, whom I have always suspected of being Lord Russell, who was then British Ambassador at the Court of Berlin. At any rate, the breach somehow or other was patched up, and on the 21st of November, her birthday, the Crown Princess gave a party at which Prince Bismarck, to the surprise of all who knew him, because he never went out anywhere in the evening, condescended to appear.

I shall never forget that evening. We assembled in a room, the dark blue velvet furniture of which had been severely criticised by some people, who thought it was rather funereal; and we were waiting for the Prince and Princess to make their entry, when through a side door appeared the figure of the Chancellor in the uniform of a white cuirassier. Everybody was struck dumb with stupefaction, and Bismarck, who realised perfectly well the impression that his unexpected appearance had produced, looked round with a sarcastic smile. He remained thus for

a few minutes; then the door of the Crown Princess's study was opened, and she herself entered the drawing-room, accompanied by the Prince and followed by her attendants. She paused near the lady who was standing nearest the door and spoke a few words with her; then, without the least haste, crossed the room, and approached the Chancellor.

They began talking together, but Bismarck seemed not to be quite at his ease, and all the while he was conversing with the Crown Princess he kept pulling and twisting his long military glove, whilst she, for her part, carefully preserved her "Royal manner." After five minutes or so she bowed slightly to the Chancellor and passed on with that trailing step which was peculiar to her. Then the Crown Prince approached the Minister. As he did so Bismarck's attitude changed at once. He, who had appeared to be rather embarrassed whilst speaking with the Princess Victoria, drew himself up, and, haughty, resolute, and proud, brought the whole weight of his personality to bear on this erstwhile opponent.

There was another episode in the life of the Crown Princess which I witnessed, and which, like the one I have just related, has remained engraved for ever in my memory. It was on a June evening. The old Emperor had been wounded by Nobiling, and his death was expected at any moment. The political circumstances were unusually grave; the Berlin Congress was to meet in a few days; the peace of Europe was trembling in the balance. After he had been brought back into his palace, William I., during one of the rare moments when consciousness returned to

him, found the strength to sign a decree conferring the Regency on the Crown Prince during his illness.

The Prince was then in England, and the news of the murderous attempt upon his father's life reached him at Hatfield House, where he was staying with Lord Salisbury. It was on a Sunday, and there was some difficulty in arranging for a special train to convey the Prince and the Princess to Dover. The telegrams that awaited them at every station where they stopped described the condition of the Emperor as being extremely critical and almost desperate. When they arrived at Berlin they were received almost as if they had been already sovereigns.

The evening was hot and rainy, dark, and the moon was hidden; it was about eleven o'clock. An immense crowd was gathered around the station to meet the travellers. When they left their railway carriage the Princess found some gracious words to say to those whom she knew; but the Prince appeared to be very nervous, and replied with some impatience to the greetings with which he was welcomed. A lady who in former days had vainly tried to be admitted to the intimacy of the Imperial couple rushed towards the Princess and kissed her hands, addressing her at the same time as "Your Majesty." The face of Princess Victoria changed considerably, and withdrawing her hands, "I am not the Empress, madame," she said, and passed on rather hurriedly.

It is certain that this haste which she found on the part of some people to give her a title which was not yet hers, made an unpleasant impression upon her because it really voiced her secret ambitions.

Nevertheless, during the illness of the Emperor she displayed extraordinary tact, and was very attentive to her father-in-law and the Empress Augusta.

The Prince as Regent found himself in an exceedingly difficult position, and obliged to follow the political line traced by the Chancellor rather than the one which he wished to see adopted. He expected at least that, as a reward for his docility, he would be allowed henceforward to share with his father the cares of the State. But Bismarck did not intend anything of the kind; nor did the old Emperor. As soon as the latter felt himself restored to his usual health, he resumed the reins of government, and the Crown Prince had to step back once more into the obscurity of his former life.

The Princess felt it deeply. She had hoped so much to be able at last to execute—or, rather, to see executed—all the humanitarian plans of her husband, and she firmly believed that his administration of affairs would have convinced the Emperor that he could without fear allow his son to replace him sometimes, and thus help him to bear the heavy burden that rested upon his shoulders.

At this time Princess Victoria had many sorrows to bear. She lost first her favourite sister, the Grand Duchess of Hesse; then came the death of her own son, Prince Waldemar, a youth in whom she had centred her highest hopes. And after that blow came many others—disappointments of every kind, anxiety concerning her other children and her husband, who had fallen into a state of utter lassitude caused by the discouragement accorded to him.

She endeavoured even more than she had done formerly to fight against her forced inaction; and it was about that time that she assembled round herself and the Prince that circle of friends who came to share their life and soften the bitterness that so often spoiled what would otherwise have been the source of much real joy. The Princess was very eclectic in her tastes, and used to receive, together with Mommsen, Helmholtz, Dubois Raymond, most of the great scientists and artists of modern Germany. The historian Ranke was a special favourite of hers, and she once asked him to give her some lessons in history—lessons that sometimes exhausted her patience by the extreme impartiality which the great thinker used to pronounce all his judgments. The dryness of Ranke's dicta used to get on her nerves; but in spite of it she felt a great sympathy for his person, as well as an immense admiration for his erudition. "The History of the Popes" was a work which she always had with her; and she wrote a commentary upon it which excited the unstinted admiration of the aged historian.

Wherever she went the Crown Princess sought the society of interesting people, and all who had the opportunity of approaching her remained under the charm of her conversation and rare intelligence. Sometimes she had discussions with those whom she was entertaining, but these discussions were ever courteous and kind. Only once do I remember her getting impatient, and that was with Lecky the historian. They were talking about the book of Renan, "The Life of Jesus," which the Princess admired very much.

Lecky, on the contrary, found the work superficial, and was irritated at the enthusiastic manner in which the Princess Victoria expressed herself, remarking that he could not forgive Renan for having "transformed Christ into a shepherd of Florian." The Princess turned her back upon him, and for a long time refused to speak to him again.

The religious convictions of the Crown Princess have been very much discussed. She had a mind too much addicted to criticism to consent ever to accept as absolute the dogmas that were preached in a church, no matter which it was; but her faith in God and her belief in a future life were as strong as they were sincere. She proved it by the way in which she lived, practising to the utmost the beautiful maxim of Guizot, that "a pure life is in itself a profession of faith." She was tolerant above all things, and was convinced that in religious matters individual liberty should be respected.

Her house was a centre of a literary and scientific activity, and her evening parties will long remain in the memory of those who had the honour to be invited to them. I remember meeting Matthew Arnold at one of them; at another, Richter, the celebrated painter; also Cornelia Meyerbeer, the daughter of the famous composer; the Countess Schleinitz, afterwards Countess Volkenstein; Angeli, the painter, to whom one owes the two best portraits that were ever made of the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess; Count Ferdinand Harrach, also an artist of no mean value, with his wife, the pretty Countess Hélène; Helmholtz, the chemist, professor at the Berlin University;

Rudolph and Paul Lindau, two brothers, the elder attached to the Foreign Office, the younger a journalist and writer of much ability. In addition to such celebrities as these I met deputies of the Reichstag; members of the Prussian House of Lords; military men who played an important part in the history of the world, such as Field-Marshal von Moltke, General Blumenthal, and Marshal von Manteuffel; Rothschild, the head of the famous banking house of that name in Frankfurt; the Mendelssohn-Bartholdys; Leyden, the physician; Mommsen, the historian—also used to attend the Princess's parties.

From time to time, too, she gave fancy balls; and no one who was present at it can forget the Venetian fête which she organised, and at which she appeared herself wearing the costume of Leonora Gonzagua, after the picture from Titian, in the Pitti Gallery at Florence—a costume that suited her admirably. On the anniversary of her silver wedding an Elizabethan party was given at the Palace, and the court of that famous Queen of England was reproduced so perfectly that the scene is talked about to this day in Berlin. When I close my eyes I can still see the Princess, dressed in silver brocade, standing beside the Prince under a canopy in the White Hall of the old Royal Castle, gazing with an amused and tender glance at all the costumed people who filed past her, and whom she thanked with her sweet smile. It was the last festivity which she was to attend; afterwards came very quickly—too quickly, indeed—troubles, sorrows, mourning, and death.

It was about that time that serious misunderstand-

ings began to arise between her and her eldest son, the Emperor William of to-day. These misunderstandings were aggravated by the interference of mischievous people who were eager to sow dissensions between mother and son. It was also then that the latent antipathy that had always existed between the Crown Princess and Prince Bismarck changed into violent hatred.

The great crime of the Iron Chancellor was the cruel way in which he fomented, by all means in his power, the disunion which already existed between young Prince William and his parents, whom he tried to lower in the estimation of the aged Emperor by contrasting their conduct with that of his grandson, who, as he continually told him, was alone worthy to succeed him. The first step which was made in order to diminish the prestige and the popularity of the Crown Prince was taken after the death of Field-Marshal von Manteuffel, when Bismarck proposed to William I. to replace him in his quality of Imperial Lieutenant in Alsace-Lorraine by young Prince William. The plan had to be abandoned almost immediately, owing to the resistance with which it was met on the part of the Crown Prince, whose clear outlook had at once grasped the consequences which such an appointment would have had in the future, and the unpopularity which it would inevitably have won for his son among certain political parties. It was entirely to this feeling—and not at all to a silly jealousy to see him invested with an authority that had always been refused to himself—that must be attributed the opposition of the Crown Prince. But the

noble feeling that guided him on that occasion was misunderstood by the object of his solicitude, as well as by the old Emperor and the great Minister who at that time ruled over the destinies of the German Empire.

It was in the course of the winter of 1887 that sinister rumours concerning the health of the Crown Prince began to circulate among the public. Alas! they proved to be but too true, and it soon became evident that the days of the Prince were numbered. The Emperor was living still, always at his post, always fulfilling the round of his daily duties, weakened by the weight of his many years, but valiant in spite of them, and of the heavy troubles that were poisoning his last hours. Intrigues without number arose around him. The lowest of cupidities were awakened at this critical moment in German history; and the story of these things was carried even to the shores of the Mediterranean, under the shade of the trees which surrounded the Villa Zirio, where Frederick William was slowly dying in presence of his despairing wife.

The world was watching this tragedy, and wondered what would happen next, and who would succumb first—the old father, tottering under the load of his many years, or the son, broken by an illness from which no recovery could be hoped. Around these two tombs, already opened and awaiting their occupants, greedy ambitions, selfish longings, and brutal appetites were fighting a remorseless battle, forgetting the whole time that this future belonged to God alone.

It was He who finally intervened. Whilst the life of Prince Frederick William was trembling in the

balance, that of his father came to a sudden end, without any special warning. The old man, exhausted by the fatigue of his long existence, dropped into that long sleep from which there is no awakening. His son became Emperor. And when at last he had the power to realise all the generous plans of his youth, and to do all the good which he had wished so ardently to do, it was too late—he was already dying.

CHAPTER XXII

VICTORIA AS EMPRESS

THE PRINCESS VICTORIA became Empress. What passed in her soul and thoughts at that solemn moment when at last the Imperial Crown became hers? Very probably her first feeling was one of despair in presence of this cruel irony of fate. After having hoped so much, after having shared so many high ambitions, so many disinterested and humanitarian plans with the husband she loved, she found herself in the presence of an inexorable reality which took away from her with one hand all that it had given to her with the other.

Instead of sharing the throne with the companion of her life, she saw herself watching at his death-bed. No tragedy could have been more cruel. Yet the Empress bore herself magnificently, and showed to the world the strength of her admirable character. In those tragic hours when the faltering but nevertheless firm hand of Frederick III. took up the reins of the German Empire, she was sublime in her abnegation, in her utter forgetfulness of her own sufferings. She succeeded in hiding from the world the anguish under which she was breaking down, and found the courage to speak in hopeful tones to the poor invalid who knew but too well that no hope was left to either of them.

During the short three months that she was Empress she appeared only once in public, and that was when inundations devastated the province of Silesia. The Empress went personally to the spot of the disasters to superintend the measures of relief. Her own heart was breaking at the time, but her sense of duty triumphed over her grief, and she left her dying husband for a few hours to go in his name to comfort other suffering beings.

I have before me now a letter written by the Empress Victoria during that dreadful time :—

"I thank you for your kind interest. It is dear to me, like everything that comes from friendly hearts is dear. I won't tell you anything about myself, leaving you to guess everything. The Emperor is feeling slightly better. I cannot say anything else. Thank Heaven he suffers less. May he soon suffer no more! If only he could get some of that rest he needs so much he would be better, but he works too much, and complains that he can't do more. May the will of the Lord be done! I pray to Him to make me resigned, also my poor invalid. He is sublime in his patience, and his one wish is to do all the good he can during the little time that is still left to him.

"I do not ask you to think about us, or to pray for us; I know that you are doing it, and I am grateful to you. When one falls from so high as I have fallen, one's friends are particularly dear to one. Sometimes it seems to me as if all this agony is nothing but a dream from which I must awake; and then anguish seizes me again, and I realise my misfortune in all its depth. And when one thinks that I belong to

the number of those who are called the happy ones of this earth! If only all the people who envy me —or, rather, who have envied me—could only guess how often the great ones of this world have to suffer for the high position which is theirs, they would not be in such a hurry to judge or to condemn them. We have even to endure the pain of not being able to talk about our sufferings, and at all costs we must fall and die like kings."

There is nothing to be added to this cry of anguish. The Empress was indeed to drink the cup of her sorrow to the dregs, but she was also to die as a Queen; and it was as a Queen, too, that she found the strength to close the eyes of the husband whom she had loved with such devotion. She laid on his breast the laurel wreath which she had brought to him when she went to meet him after the triumph of Sedan. Then she put his sword, that valiant sword which he had only handled gloriously, in his fingers, already stiffened by death, and said a long good-bye to him.

Two years elapsed after the death of the Emperor Frederick before I saw his widow once more. It was in Berlin, and she received me in her blue drawing-room. The furniture had not been changed, and the portrait of the Emperor in his white cuirassier uniform, painted by Angeli, was hanging in the place of honour.

When the Empress entered the room I could only kiss her hand and weep. Her hair had grown quite white, but the face was the same that I had always known, and the eyes had kept their old expression.

After that day I saw the Empress almost every year, either in Berlin or in Frankfurt, and for the last time at Bordighera, a few months before her death. Every time I met her I found her quieter, more serene and resigned, though during the last years of her life she took more interest in current events, and talked, moreover, with something like her former animation.

About two years before her death she became reconciled with her son, the Emperor William. Her animosity against Prince Bismarck had also lost its former sharpness, and I think that she had even pitied him at the time of his disgrace. She never lost her clear outlook on the political horizon of the moment, but she spoke but seldom on this dangerous subject. Her relations with her mother, which for a long time had been rather cold, became tender and affectionate after her widowhood had brought her closer to Queen Victoria, whose death was the last great sorrow of her daughter.

The death of the Empress Victoria was painful in the extreme. The cancer tormented her for months; and in her pain she would murmur: "The Emperor did not complain. I am not so brave as he was!"

She died as a Queen should do. Her life had been the "profession of faith" mentioned by Guizot; and whenever I read in the Holy Scripture the words "Where dost thou find a valiant woman?" I think at once of Victoria, Empress of Germany and Queen of Prussia.

PART III

Memories of Russia

CHAPTER I

ALEXANDER III. AND HIS CONSORT

THE first time I saw Alexander III. was at the time of his marriage, when he rode on horseback beside the gilded coach in which his future wife, the Princess Dagmar of Denmark, made her State entry into St. Petersburg, seated beside the Empress Marie Alexandrovna.

I was a very little girl at that time, scarcely eight years old; but whenever I close my eyes I can see quite vividly all the pomp of this grand procession as it swept along the wide Nevski Prospekt, and I remember quite well the figure of the then Heir to the Throne on a handsome bay horse, riding a little behind his father, and the smiling gracious countenance of the Imperial bride as she timidly, but so sweetly, bowed her pretty, small head in response to the acclamations of the crowd that filled the streets to greet her.

Years went on, and then once more I saw the Grand Duchess, now the Dowager Empress of Russia, one autumn morning on a platform erected on the Izmailovsky Square in St. Petersburg, with other members of the Imperial family waiting to welcome back the Russian troops from the battlefields of Turkey after the war of 1877. She had become a beautiful

woman, the embodiment of health, life, and happiness, the beloved of all, worshipped by her husband and her children, and entirely fascinating.

Her popularity was already considerable, even at that time, when the cares and weight of Imperial power had not yet fallen upon her, and one had begun, even at that distant epoch, to look up to her and to seek her protection and her favour. Those who had had the honour of knowing her intimately were loud in their praises of her intelligence and judgment, her great sense of honour, her good heart and exquisite kindness. When she became Empress the same qualities were always present, and to this day she has remained the same.

At that time I had not yet been presented to Marie Feodorovna, and it was only in 1881, a few months after the tragic death of Alexander II., I had that honour. I then saw for the first time quite closely her magnificent dark eyes and her inimitable smile. I saw her again, very soon after that in Moscow, at the time of her coronation. And when a few years later, with my first husband, I settled entirely in St. Petersburg, I had often opportunity of approaching her, and also of hearing a great deal about her from several intimate friends of hers, with whom I was also on affectionate terms. They were never chary of praising her rare qualities of mind and heart, and her beauty of soul.

The Emperor was an imposing figure. As years go on his personality becomes clearer and clearer as it emerges from the nebulous atmosphere that surrounded his lifetime, owing to his love of solitude and

his reluctance to show himself in public. It is only recently that the world has recognised him as a statesman of great merit, supreme ability, and keen perception of the needs of his country and of his people.

No one had given a thought to the possibility of his ever ascending the throne, and consequently his training had not been in that direction; but he was sincere in the great, deep, powerful love he bore for the land of his birth.

The Emperor disliked society, and even when quite a young man preferred his own fireside to outside amusements. He detested everything which savoured of pomp and magnificence, and cared in reality only for his wife and children. Timid by nature, he was painfully conscious of his inexperience of public affairs when he ascended the throne. But from the first day that the burden of the State fell upon his shoulders he applied himself to the study of the different problems of the administration and government of his great country, and tried to surround himself only with honest and trustworthy people. He succeeded in doing so, and that is one of the greatest praises that can be bestowed on him, as well as on his reign. If ever a Sovereign deserved the name of Father of his people, it was Alexander III.

Alexander III. was Russian in the strictest sense, and very different on that point from his father, who affected Occidental culture. He did not care to use any other language than Russian, and it was owing to his influence that smart society, which up to that time had always spoken French, began to use the national idiom.

The Emperor was a sincere child of the Orthodox Church, and the aim which he pursued during the thirteen years that he occupied the throne was to make Russia a strong and powerful nation, respected in Europe and throughout the world.

He has been credited with an intense dislike for Germany; but it is doubtful whether he would ever have consented to protect an anti-German agitation. He had no sympathy whatever with the policy pursued by Prince Bismarck; but Bismarck himself he respected in the same way as he respected everything that he thought was great and sincere. He had accepted the French alliance, not so much out of personal sympathies, as because he deemed it necessary for the maintenance of European equilibrium, which, he feared, might become endangered by the Triple Alliance. His amiability towards France proceeded more from this reason than from anything else. By no means a brilliant man, he possessed what is sometimes infinitely better—an extraordinary amount of common sense, that invariably dictated to him the best course to pursue in regard to the interests of his country. He had found Russia more or less in a state of chaos and confusion, and he left it to his son in a condition of unprecedented prosperity.

With his sudden removal from the scene of European politics, one of its most important factors disappeared, and Russia lost—for a time at least—a certain amount of her prestige abroad. Conscientious, straightforward, honest, and kind, Alexander III. had known how to ally firmness with kindness, and he had far more generosity and broadness in his views, as well as in

his character, than the public had ever known or guessed.

I have known intimately several ministers and statesmen who had had the honour to discuss with the Emperor some of the most important and serious questions of foreign as well as of home politics. They have all told me the same thing; that all his judgments were remarkable for a singular spirit of impartiality and justice such as is most rarely met with in a Sovereign whose high position removes him more or less from contact with the realities of life. His mind was so thoroughly honest that he seldom made mistakes, and whenever such a thing happened he was the first to recognise it, and to acknowledge any error into which circumstances had caused him to fall. He sometimes exhibited prejudices, but these had always some sound reason behind them, and did not proceed from fancy. He allowed others to tell him the truth, and did not get angry when contradicted, nor did he harbour any grudge against those who differed in opinion from him. One feared him considerably, but one loved him, and one respected him as perhaps few monarchs have ever been respected, because everyone, even his most active foes, was aware that he cared above everything else for truth, justice, and honesty. His life was that of a just man. His death was touching in its resignation.

This Emperor, whose clear blue eyes were so kind and soft, had the happiness of his wife's help in his heavy task. Her smile lightened up with its beauty the whole of his reign, and brought to it a halo of grace and joy. Amidst the cares inseparable from his

high position, he found at his own fireside the comfort and encouragement of a devoted affection, a deep tenderness, and an absolute sympathy which knew how to associate itself with his responsibilities and to help him carry them.

When I ponder over the events of the years when Alexander III. presided over the destinies of Russia, the slight figure of the Empress Marie seems to preside over that whole epoch; and again I see her soft looks and her large, dark eyes, which, every time they met those of her husband, brightened up with an infinite tenderness. Placed in a position where her every action was criticised, Marie Feodorovna knew how to disarm every critic. To see her only from the distance was considered a happiness; and whenever she entered a room and bowed to the people assembled, she used to do so in a manner that was so exclusively her own, so entirely different from the usual salutation of other Sovereigns, that each individual present could easily believe that she was recognised by the Empress, and was the object of her special welcome.

The Empress was not only amiable by nature, but she tried to show herself so. She knew that she was liked, and she rejoiced in the feelings that she inspired. It was interesting, whenever young girls were presented to her upon their entering society, to notice the kindness with which she greeted them. She always sought to put them at their ease, and to manifest her desire that they should enjoy themselves at the balls it pleased her to give for them. No mother could have been more tender than she

EMPEROR ALEXANDER III.

EMPRESS MARIE FEODOROVNA

showed herself upon these occasions. And for it the girls worshipped the Empress ever afterwards.

Marie Feodorovna liked society, and was fond of dancing and of dress, but though the most elegant woman in her Empire, she was very far from being frivolous in her tastes, as some people have accused her. She understood in its highest sense the meaning of her duties and of her mission as a Sovereign. From the height of the throne upon which the affection of her husband had raised her she gave the most touching example of conjugal devotion and of love for her people. She understood the requirements of her exalted station down to their smallest details; and if she liked balls, receptions, and gaiety of every kind, it was partly because she knew that they were on the programme of the existence of every Sovereign, who ought to lead in the amusements of select society.

Whilst never faltering in the attention that she gave to the numerous charitable establishments or the educational institutions placed under her patronage, she watched over the manners and morals of smart society, and gave to it in her own person the example of all the virtues. She contrived to raise the moral standard of the capital and to give to St. Petersburg society a dignity of conduct that excluded vulgarity as well as coarseness of language, and made the Russian capital one of the pleasantest and most enjoyable in Europe. Everyone looked up to her, and tried to deserve her friendship, and, as it was very well known that she awarded it only to those who deserved it, one tried to become worthy of it; society strove to find its happiness in the fulfilment of its duties.

Under her patronage the Court of St. Petersburg was most brilliant, and at the same time innocent amusements remained the order of the day. The Empress liked society and all that it offered of pleasant and merry enjoyments. She was fond of dancing for the pleasure that she found in it; of dress, because she thought with reason that a woman ought to try and look nice if only in order to satisfy her husband's pride in her. She used herself to wear most elegant clothes, but whilst appearing with all the magnificence inherent to her exalted rank when it was necessary for her to do so, no one was more simple in her every-day apparel, neither did she ever make mistakes of taste, always wearing the right gown in the right surroundings. Under her auspices a luxury devoid of exaggeration prevailed, and if society danced often, it knew also how to cultivate intelligent conversation, and to discuss the events of the day. Marie Feodorovna's mind did not dread the remarks of others, and she favoured the interchange of opinions among her subjects. She was afraid of nothing, being so entirely secure in the love that she had known how to inspire in her people.

The children of the Imperial couple were worthy of the hope that their parents, as well as the whole nation, had placed in them.

At that distant time of which I am writing, the present Emperor of Russia, Nicholas II., promised to become worthy of his august father and mother, and to justify all the expectations that were entwined around his person. His brother, the Grand Duke George Alexandrovitch, was not living in St. Petersburg

on account of his health; the Grand Duchess Olga, now married to Prince Peter of Oldenburg, was still a child, almost in arms, and the young Grand Duchess Xenia, whose large eyes were so much like those of her Imperial mother, was only beginning to go out into society, and promised already to become the exquisite woman she is to-day. When one looked at this happy family, so united, so worthy of all the prosperities this earth can give, one could not foresee that their happiness was destined to be so quickly torn to pieces by the premature death of its head, whose existence was so indispensable to the welfare of the great Russian Empire.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

WHEN Alexander III. ascended the throne, the Imperial Family was much more numerous than is the case at the present day. The Romanoffs, though a strong and powerful race, are not long-lived; they seldom reach the age of sixty. At the period of which I write, some thirty years ago, the brothers and the cousins of the Emperor were enjoying excellent health, and they could often be met in the houses of the different members of Court society, at entertainments which they liked to attend, and where they were always welcome.

The Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch, the younger brother of the Sovereign, was a splendid type of man, a really *grand seigneur*, in the French acceptation of that word, extremely cultured, with a keen intelligence, perfect taste, and a very wide knowledge of art and artistic questions. Whenever he visited Paris—which was almost every spring and autumn—he liked to go over its museums and curiosities, and I remember that once, in the course of conversation, M. George Cain, the distinguished Conservator of the Carnavalet Museum, and the man who has made the closest study of old Paris such as it was a century or two ago, told me that there was one person

who knew it quite as well, if not better than he did, and that was the Grand Duke Vladimir, who had also studied the history of ancient Lutèce, who cared for each of its stones, and who was perfectly aware of the legends attached to every one of its monuments, as well as of the historical associations that were entwined around it.

The Grand Duke's Consort, the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, exercised during her youth a considerable influence over St. Petersburg society, an influence which is still very important, especially in certain circles and among certain people. She was a beautiful, graceful Princess, gifted with singular qualities, and who could produce only the most favourable impression upon all those with whom she came into contact. She was a truly great lady in her manners, and she has remained in her old age a type of the Grand Duchesses of former times, such as the traditions of the eighteenth century represent them to us. Her personality has been freely discussed, but all that I can say about her is that she has always shown herself a superior woman in all the different incidents of her life.

The second brother of the Emperor, the Grand Duke Alexis, was an exceedingly pleasant man, and his entertaining conversation was vastly appreciated by his friends. He was a great favourite in society, but did not frequent it much, preferring the company of a small set, with whom he felt perfectly at his ease.

The Grand Duke Serge was among all the sons of Alexander II. the one who resembled him the most, and by a sad coincidence his life ended in the same

tragic manner as that of his father. He was an intelligent man, very cultivated and well read, who had had the fortune to win for his wife a woman gifted with the rarest qualities of heart and soul, whose life was but one long sacrifice to the welfare of her neighbour and the relief of suffering humanity. Long before she buried her youth and her beauty under the heavy veil of the nun, after the catastrophe that had widowed her, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth had already shown herself the guardian angel of the unfortunate and afflicted. In Moscow she was revered as a saint from the very first moment that she came to live there; in her family circle one felt for her that admiration and that deep reverence which exceptional beings alone can inspire.

I remember her immediately after her marriage, when she appeared on the horizon of St. Petersburg society in all the splendour of her truly marvellous beauty and of her brilliant youth, and I do not think that a brighter vision ever graced a room than that of this lovely Princess when she entered an apartment slightly behind the Empress, or followed the latter during a Court festivity. Among all the remembrances of my youth, one of the liveliest that has remained engraved upon my mind is a quadrille danced at one of the balls in the Winter Palace. In it Marie Feodorovna was surrounded by her three sisters-in-law, the Grand Duchesses Marie Pavlovna, Elizabeth Feodorovna, and Alexandra Georgievna, the young wife of the Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovitch, so soon to be snatched away by death. These four lovely women, in the splendour of their festive attire and of

their sparkling jewels, made one of those sights that one likes to evoke in after life.

The Grand Duchess Alexandra Georgievna was the daughter of the late King George of Greece and of that noble Queen Olga, whose gentle, kind personality has done so much to consolidate and render popular the Danish dynasty on the Greek Throne. Her marriage with the Grand Duke Paul had been a source of great delight to the whole of the Imperial Family, who had welcomed with the utmost pleasure the arrival in its midst of the young Greek Princess. Intelligent, charming, bright, she conquered all hearts from the first moment she appeared in Russia, and it is quite certain that she would have had quite an exceptional position in St. Petersburg society if death had not brutally destroyed all the hopes centred in her, and carried away that young and useful life. The Grand Duke Paul lives now almost the whole year abroad; the daughter of Alexandra Georgievna has also left Russia for a time, and, except a marble tomb in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, there is nothing left in St. Petersburg to remind one of the sweet, graceful being who contrived to do so much good and to win for herself so many friends during her short life.

The uncles of the Emperor were still alive when I settled in Russia. I scarcely knew them, having only been presented to the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievitch during one of the latter's journeys to Berlin, and to the Grand Duke Constantine Nicolaievitch one evening at a small reception given by his wife, the Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna, who showed

me always much kindness on account of my mother, of whom she had been extremely fond. As for the Grand Duke Michael Nicolaievitch, I often met him, though he rarely spoke to me otherwise than to say good morning; but I had the honour to be sometimes received by his wife, the Grand Duchess Olga Feodorovna, a Princess of Baden by birth, and a very cultured woman. Among the Grand Duchesses she was the one that knew best how to receive the guests she invited to her house, and who did so in the kindest manner, without, however, falling into any unnecessary familiarity. She was extremely well learned and read, was fond of art and literature, keeping herself admirably informed as to new books worth reading. Owing to this habit she was better aware than most people in Russia of the state of public opinion at home or abroad. She held the opinion that, life being short, it was useless to waste any part of it in talking with people who were not worthy of attention. She was a woman of strong character and exceptional qualities, and her relatively premature death constituted an enormous loss for her family as well as for the cultured circle of St. Petersburg society.

All the children of the Grand Duchess Olga became distinguished men. The literary and historical works of her eldest son, the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch, would have assured him a considerable place among the savants of his generation, even if he had been a private person instead of a member of a reigning house. The activity displayed by the Grand Duke Alexander Michailovitch, the husband of the present Emperor's sister, the Grand Duchess Xenia,

in the cause of aviation, which he has zealously propagated in Russia, is well known everywhere. All these Princes have tried to make themselves useful to their country. I have mentioned the Grand Duke Constantine Nicolaievitch. His son, the Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovitch, is also an example of the fact that students and authors can be found on the steps of a throne. The poetical works of that Prince will give him a lasting place in Russian literature, and he did more than anyone else to develop among high-born society in St. Petersburg a taste for all things that belong to the domain of art and science. He encouraged private theatricals, where exclusively Russian dramas and comedies were enacted, such as the works of Count Alexis Tolstoy, the cousin of Count Leo, and others in the same style.

Last winter the Grand Duke's own tragedy, *The King of the Jews*, which treated of Christ's passion and death, was represented, by special permission of the Emperor, on the stage of the Imperial Theatre, where it obtained considerable success, being most impressively acted and written in flowing lyric verses that deeply moved the audience. The staging of this tragedy caused quite a mild stir and sensation in St. Petersburg society, as the Holy Synod objected to its being authorised on the ground that it was not reverential to discuss the incidents attending the sacred death in a theatrical production; they upheld this attitude despite the deep religious atmosphere that pervaded the whole work. However, the Emperor overruled the prejudices of the clergy, and gave his own theatre to his cousin, with the sole condition that

the invitations should be limited to a certain circle of people, and the general public not allowed in. The Grand Duke, however, with the truly liberal spirit of which he has always given proof, sent out invitations to the representatives of the Russian as well as of the foreign press, and for the first time these found themselves admitted as honoured guests in the Imperial Palace, and in the theatre which the great Catherine herself had caused to be built for the entertainment of her Court.

The Grand Duke Constantine married a Princess of Saxe-Altenburg, a lady of high culture and attainments, and the couple led a most affectionate life, surrounded by their numerous children, the eldest of whom has married the Princess Hélène of Servia, the daughter of the present King.

Alexander III. had also a distant aunt, the Grand Duchess Catherine Michailovna, the daughter of the famous Grand Duchess Hélène Pavlovna, whose *salon* exercised such a considerable influence during the early years of the reign of the Emperor Alexander II. The Grand Duchess Catherine only died in 1894, a few months before the father of the present Tsar, and I knew her very well, having sometimes been invited to dinner, as well as to the small receptions which she was very fond of giving. She was kind and charitable, and an excellent Princess—a great lady with dignified manners, who liked society and was fond of entertaining. She used to give her attention to numerous charitable institutions, whilst trying her best to keep up the old traditions which she had inherited from her parents.

Countess Zeneide Beauharnais

The Leuchtenberg Princes, sons of the Grand Duchess Marie Nicolaievna, the sister of Alexander II., were always treated like Grand Dukes, and bore also the title of Imperial Highness. The daughters also were given equal rank. Duke Eugène had married a distant cousin of mine, Mlle. Skobeleff, the sister of the famous general of that name. She was first known after her marriage as Countess Beauharnais, but later on created Duchess of Leuchtenberg by Alexander III., who was always very fond of her. I have seen many pretty women in the course of my already long life, but I have never met such a radiant creature as Zeneide Beauharnais, or Zina, as her family called her. This word "radiant" is the only one that can describe her properly; there was in her whole being something so unusual, that whenever she entered a room she eclipsed all others by the incomparable charm that emanated from her person; even those who reviled her most unsparingly envied her most sincerely, and were forced to acknowledge her superlative attractiveness.

To all the physical and intellectual gifts that distinguished her, Zeneide Beauharnais added a sincere kindness of nature. One never heard her say an unkind thing or make a nasty remark, or echo ill-natured gossip. She was criticised unsparingly among the people whom her beauty and success displeased, but she never noticed it, and used to go on her way serene and unconscious of the evil of a world that she always tried to view through rosy spectacles. Unhappily, she died while still quite young. Her husband followed her very soon to the grave, and of all the Leuchtenberg

family there remains alive but one member, the Princess Eugénie of Oldenburg, also a distinguished woman, and deserving more than passing notice. She was the most admirable hostess St. Petersburg has ever seen. Her husband, Prince Alexander of Oldenburg, also has consecrated all his activity, as his father, Prince Peter, had done before him, to philanthropic deeds, and Russia owes him a great deal in that respect. He is president of several schools and of the Institute of Experimental Medicine, and is himself a man of high learning and erudition.

In relating these incidents and expressing these views of the Russian Imperial Family, I hope to banish prejudices that exist concerning it. It is false to represent our Grand Dukes as riotous people, who only care for their personal amusements. The truth is that among the members of our reigning house there are to be found a considerable number of distinguished men and women who lead useful, busy lives, devoid of aimlessness, and whose ambitions are directed towards noble ends and the fulfilment of the duties of their high station. In that respect the Romanoffs can serve as an example to many other dynasties.

CHAPTER III

SOME OF THE EMPEROR'S MINISTERS

ALEXANDER III. did not like to see new faces around him. He seldom parted from any of his advisers, and during the thirteen years of his reign Count Nicholas Ignatieff was about the only one he dismissed with any approach to haste.

Count Ignatieff was called by the Emperor to the responsible post of Minister of the Interior a few weeks after the Sovereign's accession. He was very popular among the old Russian Conservative party, over whom he had retained great influence, notwithstanding the disappointments that had followed upon the war with Turkey in 1877 and the Berlin Congress. During the whole time of his sojourn at Constantinople Russian prestige was high in the Near East, and the Treaty of San Stefano, as originally drawn up by him previous to its revision by the Great Powers, had thoroughly satisfied the pride of the Russian nation. The Emperor, whilst still Heir Apparent to the Crown, had followed Count Ignatieff's political career with great attention, and when he offered him the portfolio of the Interior—the most difficult post in the whole Empire—he did so with the idea that he would find in him a faithful and obedient servant,

who would submit blindly to the orders of his Imperial master.

Unfortunately, the personal character of each of the two men was so entirely different that the impossibility of their working together soon became very evident. The Emperor was of a particularly frank and straight disposition, and his strong, loyal, earnest nature refused to admit the possibility of even the slightest compromise in questions where his principles were concerned. Ignatieff, however, had lived far too long in the East not to have become imbued to a certain degree with the conviction that, provided one reached the goal in view, that fact justified whatever means were employed. He fully realised the aspirations of a certain part of the Russian nation to inaugurate a system of government akin to that practised in other European countries, and he imagined that it would be possible by means of certain concessions to provide it with a semblance of constitution that would mean little beyond empty words. Alexander III. refused to accept such a compromise; he considered it to be beneath his dignity as a Sovereign and his self-respect as a man.

Under these conditions a rupture was inevitable, and, indeed, had been long forseen by those who knew the Emperor and his adviser: Count Ignatieff had to resign his post. Russia required at this period of its history the rule of a firm hand, and it is to the honour of the Monarch that his love for his country, in alliance with his clear common sense, showed to him at once and without hesitation the right road to take. He knew and understood his people; he realised what

they required, and how they wanted to be led; he also saw that, above all, the nation wanted to know the path by which it was being led toward greatness and prosperity.

I was very fond of Count Ignatieff, not only because I was related to him, but also by reason of his good qualities. He was a very remarkable and singular personage, and a great patriot, even when he happened to be mistaken in his points of view or in his actions. His views on politics were very clear and of a very high order, and it is quite certain that if he had been listened to in 1877, the Russian Army would have entered Constantinople, and obliged Europe to accept the fact. It is also impossible to deny that the Treaty of San Stefano, such as he had drawn it, would have ensured later on a more permanent peace in the Balkans than did the Berlin Congress, of which the only tangible result was to procure unhoped-for advantages to Austria as well as to England.

When he retired from public life, Count Ignatieff spent each winter in St. Petersburg, and for a considerable number of years was President of the Slavonic Society, where his influence was exercised in favour of Russian influence in the Balkans. He died a few years ago at a very advanced age.

His successor as Minister of the Interior, Count Dmitry Tolstoy, was a very different character, and belonged to that order of statesmen who, certain of their own power, go through public life without looking back, and without the slightest misgiving as to the advisability of the course they have embarked upon. He was exactly the man that an autocrat

such as Alexander III. required, and he became one of his most valued colleagues. Count Tolstoy was often accused of following an out-of-date policy. This reproach was not fair, because, under his administration, the country not only recuperated itself after the wounds inflicted upon it by the Turkish war and the subsequent Nihilist agitation, but, moreover, entered upon an era of prosperity such as it had not known since the Crimean campaign. The serene peacefulness that prevailed throughout Russia at the time of his death constituted the greatest praise of his statesmanship.

M. Dournovo, one of his subordinates, succeeded Count Tolstoy, and in his turn was succeeded by M. Gorémykin, who to-day occupies the responsible post of Prime Minister. It is the general opinion of those most able to form a judgment concerning him that M. Gorémykin is one of the greatest intelligences in Russia. One of my greatest friends, General Tchérévine, used always to say that it would be a happy day for Russia when M. Gorémykin became head of its government. He is one of the very few men upon whose private or political life no breath of suspicion has ever rested. A devoted servant of his Sovereign, a faithful citizen of his country, he is at the same time one of the most enlightened minds in his generation, blameless as a man, and above reproach as a statesman.

One of the first cares of Alexander III. when he ascended the throne was to put the finances of his empire on a strong and healthy footing. In that respect, too, he succeeded in finding some intelligent

collaborators, and most certainly it is to his efforts in that direction that Russia owes her actual immense material prosperity. Under the direction of Alexander III., M. Wischnegradsky at first, and Count Witte later on, gave a new impulse to the industry, as well as to the financial affairs of the country.

M. Wischnegradsky was one of my best friends. This reason prevents me from saying all that I would like concerning him, and his death was a sincere and lasting sorrow to me. He was a man gifted with a rare intelligence and with a most marvellous capacity for working; it was, indeed, entirely due to overwork that he contracted the illness which finally resulted in his relatively early death. He entertained a touching affection and devotion for the person of the Emperor. A letter which he wrote to me at the time when the state of his health obliged him to retire from public life so vividly portrays how faithful a servant the Crown lost in him, that I am impelled to quote one of its passages:

"As to myself personally," he wrote, "I have not been very lucky this year. With the exception of the five weeks which I spent in the Crimea, I have had cold and rainy weather everywhere, and this prevented my health so from improving that it is still in a very precarious condition, requiring much care and considerable quiet, undisturbed by worries or responsibilities. Of course, I had to explain all this quite frankly and sincerely, and I have had the immense happiness to find that my explanations have been received with a kindness and cordiality I had hardly a right to expect. These feelings concerning myself have

been expressed in most gracious and cordial words, which have entirely relieved my mind and filled my heart with unbounded gratitude, especially because in conveying them to me it has been hinted that I could still hope in the future to be useful to my country without tiring myself to the extent that was necessary to fill properly the functions hitherto entrusted to me.

"This has quite reinstated the serenity of my mind —so imperative to my recovery—and I feel myself already considerably better. Pray excuse me, my dearest of friends, if I worry you so much with details that concern me personally, but you have always shown such interest in my career that I feel sure it will not bore you too much to read this letter. I am satisfied that you will experience considerable pleasure in learning that I feel quite satisfied as to my health, and that everything that has taken place has not only given me great satisfaction, but has even gone far beyond what I could hope or expect."

I have copied this letter without suppressing any essential part because it conveys an idea of the kindness with which Alexander III. treated all who were associated with him in governing the country, as well as the affection and devotion which he inspired in them for his own person.

M. Wischnegradsky was succeeded as Minister of Finance by a personage who has played a much more considerable part in the world, and whose signature figures at the bottom of a document, about which Russia can only think with deep and lasting sorrow. I mean the Treaty of Portsmouth. Apart from this, Count Witte will occupy a most important place in the

history of modern Russia on account of the many important political measures with which he has been associated, not the least being the promulgation of the Imperial Manifesto of October 17th, 1905. He is a man with enthusiastic friends and passionate enemies, and who has ever distinguished himself by a grand indifference to the opinions of others concerning himself. His views are those of a really great statesman, capable of making mistakes but not of acting stupidly. In opinions he is pertinacious, in intentions persevering, and in actions free from meanness.

There was a time when I used to see him often. One day, when he called, we talked upon general subjects, and he expressed the following remarkable opinion, which I have never forgotten:

"Every statesman goes through four different phases in his public life. During the first he is hated by everybody; in the second he excites surprise; admiration for him begins in the third stage; but when the fourth arrives he meets with servility wherever he goes. I am talking here, of course, only of a statesman who has contrived not only to reach the summit of his ambitions, but also succeeded in maintaining himself there. As concerns myself, I am just passing out of the first into the second of these phases, and it is the most difficult one, because the remaining two follow quite naturally. At the present moment all the other ministers are my adversaries, because they do not understand that Russia requires to be governed in a truly Russian sense. It is for that reason that a former Minister of Finance, M. Bunge, told me in the Council of State that he would always oppose

anything which I might propose, because he believed all my plans tended towards the destruction of what had been accomplished during the former reign; to this I replied that we ought only to be concerned with the present."

It must not be forgotten that this conversation took place at the beginning of the year 1894, when Alexander III. was still on the throne.

At that distant period the plans of Count, then M., Witte and his intentions were imbued with an even greater leaning towards autocracy and despotism than those of M. Pobedonostseff himself. His great ambition and desire was to re-establish corporal punishment, to limit the authority of the Courts of Law by making them entirely subservient to instruction from the Sovereign, and in general to govern the country with an iron hand divested of a velvet glove. When one day I remarked to him that, after all, a revolution was nevertheless as possible in Russia as much as in any other country, he replied to me in a most decided manner that he personally did not believe at all in such a possibility, because the nation would never dare to carry its discontent and its desire for a change of government to such lengths. He then expressed the views which he held at that time concerning the administration of the finances, at the head of which he had been appointed. His words were:

"A Minister cannot practise economy in the administration of a State; money can only be found by spending it lavishly. One must open wide credits to private people in order to give them the possibility of meeting moments of crisis, such as occur in every

life. But so far as the peasants and rural classes are concerned, before everything else they must have knocked out of their heads the idea that in general they have something to claim. I am quite willing not to insist on their paying the arrears of taxes which I know they will never be able to meet, but I do not wish them to reckon upon the fact as a right. I should always wait before making concessions for some extraordinary event, such as, for instance, would be the marriage of the Heir to the Throne."

This insight into the state of mind of the Russian peasants shows that Count Witte knew his country admirably well, because one of the principal causes of all the disorders that have ever taken place in Russia has been the absurd idea that has prevailed among the rural classes ever since the emancipation of the serfs, that the Sovereign was going to take away land from its former owners in order to present it to the peasantry. Every statesman was more or less aware of this peculiarity, and having also some experience of the activities of agitators who tried to persuade the peasants to claim the land, was therefore obliged to struggle against this foolish idea.

The Emperor Alexander III. had understood the need for combating this superstition better than anyone else when, at the time of his coronation in Moscow, he made his famous speech to the representatives of the peasants then assembled within the walls of the White Stone city, as it is still familiarly called. In that oration he declared to them that he would always protect the principle of private property, no matter in whose hands it rested, and that the peasants had

better understand and thoroughly realise that he would never dispossess in their favour the present owners of the soil. These solemn words did more toward the pacification of the public mind in the country than anything else would have done, and the Russian nobility owe a debt of gratitude to the Emperor Alexander III. for having uttered them.

During the eventful years of 1905 and 1906 I was not living in Russia, and therefore cannot add anything from personal knowledge respecting Count Witte during that important epoch in Russian history.

In mentioning the Ministers and other officials of the late Emperor, I find that I have not said anything yet concerning M. de Giers, who remained at the head of the Foreign Office during the whole time Alexander III. was on the throne. M. de Giers was the pupil of Prince Gortschakov and a diplomat of the old school which still believed in the personal influence of sovereigns in the conduct of the political affairs of the world, as well as in that of family alliances. The reproach was often levelled at M. de Giers that he was lacking in initiative, and it was not an unjust one. It is a question, however, whether a Minister with personal initiative would have been the right man in the right place beside the Emperor Alexander III., whose policy was an eminently sound and healthy one, entirely Russian, and answering to the requirements and the needs of Russia. At this distance of time I do not remember who it was said that autocracy would be an ideal form of government, provided it was being exercised by a clever autocrat without any leanings towards tyranny. Whoever may accept this

paradox must admit that no autocrat ever understood his duties and his mission better than the father of our present gracious sovereign, and must also recognise the further fact that his administration brought nothing but prosperity to his subjects.

Before ending this chapter, I must say a few words concerning the famous Procurator of the Holy Synod, M. Pobedonostseff, whose powerful personality exercised such considerable influence during the whole life and reign of Alexander III. I numbered him among my personal friends, if I can make use of such an expression in view of the enormous distance that separated a young woman of the age I was at that time from the great and mighty statesman that M. Pobedonostseff was. He always treated me with infinite kindness and an affability for which I shall always feel grateful. M. Pobedonostseff was one of the most learned men of his generation and also of Europe: the works which he has written are considered as classics, and in matters of jurisprudence few people have equalled him. What is not so well known abroad, where he has been represented as a harsh, cold man, is his amiability, his charm of conversation, the shrewdness and extreme delicacy of his mind, which made conversation with him entirely attractive. In spite of the extreme rigidity of his principles, he knew better than anyone else how to make concessions to circumstances, and was never absolute in his judgments or appreciations. He was an ardent patriot and a convinced adherent of the Orthodox Church, and he lived a life always consistent with himself, and with the principles of fidelity and loyalty to the throne

that he served during the whole course of his long life.

Standing as it does in history next to the imposing figure of Alexander III., the personality of his old teacher, who had become his friend and adviser, shines with a brilliancy almost equal to that of the Emperor. Pobedonostseff lived the life of a just man, and when he died he could do so peacefully. In repeating his *Nunc dimittis* he had the consciousness of an accomplished task, undertaken and finished courageously without any faintness of heart, fulfilled with affection for the country he had loved so well, and for a monarch whom he had obeyed and helped with all the experience of his earnest, wonderful, and clear intelligence.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSONAL FRIENDS OF THE EMPEROR

ALEXANDER III. did not give his friendship easily, but, once given, those who found themselves honoured with it knew that they could always rely on the kindness of their Sovereign, unless they were guilty of some grave error. Among the many qualities of the late Emperor were his knowledge of men and the accuracy of his judgments concerning their character. Of those who helped him in governing, not one man proved unworthy of his choice. In his immediate entourage only honest people were to be found; and among his ministers, whilst some were good and some bad, none proved greedy, or capable of putting his own interest before that of his Sovereign or of his country. The intimate friends of Alexander III. were not numerous, but they surrounded him with great devotion and absolute disinterestedness. He knew how to appreciate such faithfulness, and he gave reward not so much in honours and dignities, as invariable kindness of treatment and the confidence which he reposed in them. He did not care to see new faces around him, and his military household was considerably reduced in numbers compared with that of his predecessor. Thus during the thirteen years he occupied the throne he only nominated one general aide-

de-camp in constant attendance on himself, and some three or four others, selecting men he knew personally and whom he liked to have near him.

His greatest friend and most faithful councillor was Count Woronzoff Dachkoff, who held the difficult post of Minister of the Imperial Household. Long before the accession of Alexander III. he had been honoured with his confidence and affection, and at the present moment he occupies the responsible position of Viceroy of the Caucasus. During the preceding reign Count Woronzoff had attained quite an exceptional position at Court on account of the great influence which he exercised. He had, it is true, many enemies, and was the object of jealousy and rivalry on the part of all those who desired to supersede him in his functions; but though he was intensely disliked in some quarters, he gained the esteem and respect of all those with whom he came into contact. He was a perfect gentleman and a great nobleman in the fullest sense of that word; had perfect tact, and always observed an extreme delicacy in his relations with the Imperial Family, as well as with the different members of the smart and the official society of St. Petersburg, who had constantly to do with him in some matter or other. He has been accused of being very personal in his likes and dislikes, and of not being at all obliging on occasions when it would have been easy for him to show himself so; but when one considers the position in which he found himself placed, one may well doubt whether it would have been possible for him to satisfy everybody who sought his favour or help.

Count Woronzoff is a man of high intelligence, of

which he has given convincing proof in the different difficult posts which he has filled with honour and distinction. When he disappears from the political scene it will not be easy to find in Russia another person of his high integrity and so entirely free from those petty lapses to which the world in general attaches little importance, but which, nevertheless, make or mar the character of a public man.

Personally, I have rarely met Count Woronzoff save in an official capacity, or at some great Court function, but on a very sad—if not the saddest—occasion in my life circumstances drew me nearer to him, and I have retained for him a feeling of gratitude which will only end with my own existence. At a moment when I found myself in great moral difficulties, when many people who had cringed to me the day before turned round and began rending me, I found in Count Woronzoff a true friend.

The Emperor Alexander III. had another intimate friend in the person of Count Serge Scheremetieff, also a great nobleman, and the type of those Russian Barines of times past of whom we used to read in old history books. He led a truly patriarchal existence in the bosom of his numerous family, protected artists, scientific and literary men, was immensely wealthy, and made the most noble use of his enormous fortune. The Emperor and the Empress were frequent visitors to his house, and both had the greatest respect for him, treating him like a true and trustworthy friend. They were likewise much attached to the Countess, a Princess Wiazemsky by birth, and the granddaughter of the famous poet of that name.

Count Serge Scheremetieff had a brother, Count Alexander, married to a Countess Heyden, whose father had occupied for many years the responsible position of Governor-General of Finland, where he succeeded in securing many friends, and whose mother, the Countess Heyden, had been a personal friend of the Empress Marie Alexandrovna. This lady did more than any other woman in Russia for the development of the Red Cross Society, as well as the organisation of hospitals and sanitary refuges, where the poor of St. Petersburg could be treated gratuitously.

After her death her daughter, the Countess Mary Scheremetieff, continued her work, and in her turn has applied to the noblest aims the great fortune of which Providence had placed at her disposal. Her husband, Count Alexander, is a most distinguished musician, and keeps a private orchestra, which gives frequent public concerts, where one can hear the best modern musical productions. Last winter he gave a performance of *Parsifal* in the private theatre of the Emperor at the Ermitage Palace, that drew together all the smart society of St. Petersburg. Count and Countess Scheremetieff entertain a great deal in their splendid house on the French Quay, and they used every season to give private theatricals, where classical Russian pieces were represented, in which the Count himself took a leading part. Invitations to these festivities were eagerly sought after, and the Emperor and Empress, together with the other members of the Imperial family, were nearly always present, as well as the most select families of the great capital.

The friends of Alexander III. were generally called the Gatschina coterie, because they were for the most composed of people who were invited to this favourite palace of the Sovereign when he was in residence. The most influential member of it was General Tchérévine, the head of the Okhrana, or personal guard of the Emperor, who had the control at the same time of the whole organisation of the political police of the Empire. During the whole reign of Alexander III. he was, next to the Emperor, the most powerful man in Russia, and at the request of Nicholas II. he retained his position when the latter came to the throne. He, however, only survived the late Tsar a few months, as he died before the Coronation of his new master.

When talking of him I wonder whether I shall be able to do so with sufficient impartiality. For years the General was one of my dearest and most intimate friends. I have known him so well that it is almost embarrassing for me to speak about him, because everything that I could say might seem either entirely banal or affected, or else uttered with the desire to give myself importance, which would be far, indeed, from my intention. Though I wish to pay a last homage of sincere affection and respect to the friend of my youth, I would also bear witness to the great qualities of this eminent and remarkable man, to his intelligence, tact, and heart, as well as his devotion to the responsible duties of his office.

Tchérévine until his death was the most popular man in St. Petersburg society, not only on account of the high and important duties with which he was

entrusted, but especially owing to his rare personal qualities. Devoted to his Imperial Master, he proved himself a true and reliable friend, never hesitating to speak quite frankly when the necessity arose, or to contradict his Sovereign, in order to let him learn the truth. He was allowed an entire freedom of speech, and he used it to the best purpose by bringing to the knowledge of Alexander III. things that the latter would otherwise never have had the chance of hearing.

He was not afraid of taking responsibilities, even of a nature before which less brave men would have recoiled. Thus, one day Alexander III. told him that he regretted the abolition of the famous Third Section of the political police of the Empire, and that he had decided to call it into existence once more. He ordered him to prepare the necessary ukase for the Senate, expressing his determination to return to the past order of things. Tchérévine, of course, executed the command which had been given him, but instead of hastening to send the ukase to its destination, as many other people would have done in his place, he took it upon himself, not finding the measure wise or opportune, to keep the document in his drawer and to delay its dispatch. Two days later the Emperor asked him whether the ukase had been already forwarded, and on the reply of the General that he had thought it better to wait, asked him to return it to him, adding that, after all, when thinking the matter over, he had changed his mind. Another occasion on which Tchérévine showed his independence of spirit was at the beginning of the present reign, when the

question again arose of the organisation of a ministry of police, the direction of which it was intended to confide to the General. The latter vigorously opposed the idea, saying that in his opinion the young Emperor ought not to begin his reign by thus giving to the whole world a proof that he required other protection than the love that he inspired in his new subjects.

These instances, two of many others of the same kind, will prove better than anything else the kind of nature this remarkable personage possessed, who, notwithstanding the immense power which he wielded, was a man of wonderful modesty. He ever sought opportunities to be useful to others, to redress injustice, and thought it his duty to put before the eyes of his master everything that was to the advantage of others, carefully concealing from him all that might be construed as a desire to put his own person in evidence.

Instead of looking for personal honours and dignities, General Tchérévine never required anything for himself, and he died a relatively poor man, in spite of the many millions that had passed through his hands, and of which he had had the free disposal.

More than one attempt was made against his life, but he never boasted about this, as others would have done, and except once, when the fact could not be hidden from the public, he never mentioned the subject, even to the Emperor. His courage was undaunted, and his fatalism deeply rooted. He believed in his own destiny, which was really a happy one, as he had the rare good fortune to die before either age or sickness had overtaken him, and in full possession of

the confidence of his Sovereign. He died with an unsullied reputation, with the feeling of having always done his duty and of having never refrained from self-sacrifice whenever circumstances required it, and he carried with him to his grave the respect as well as the affection of all those who had known him.

He was the most faithful friend and the wisest adviser any monarch could have had. The Emperor Alexander III. liked and appreciated his rare qualities, and the Empress also had a warm affection for him. On his side he had a kind of worship for the person of Marie Feodorovna. His eyes, which had sometimes such a dry expression, used to fill with moisture whenever he mentioned her name, and he often told me that no one knew, nor could properly appreciate, the rare, the exquisite qualities of the Empress, her perfect heart, her pure and true soul, her genuine and never-failing kindness. He was her knight, true and faithful, having sworn to her a devotion as passionate as it was respectful, and he always used to say that she represented for him the most perfect being he had ever met in the course of his life—a veritable angel in woman's shape.

One of the distinctive features of Tchérévine's character was his absolute discretion. Never on a single occasion did one word escape his lips that he ought not to have uttered. Never once did he commit an indiscretion, and I may add that he would never have awarded his friendship or his trust to any person capable of showing herself indiscreet. He was a good judge of character, and did not give his confidence easily. I think I can say with truth that I

am one of the people who knew him best. I owe him much, and still feel his death acutely. His memory will be treasured in my heart as long as I live.

Such men are not often met with, and he was worthy of the tears which the Empress Marie Feodorovna shed upon his coffin. She lost in him not only a devoted, faithful, and intelligent servant, but also a friend passionately attached to her person and to her family. With her usual comprehension of men and things the Empress knew how to appreciate the General, during whose last moments she was present, holding his hands and weeping silently as he slowly expired; and if anything could have eased the death struggle of a man who did not wish to die, yet felt he was passing away in the full strength of his manhood and activity at a time when he knew himself to be almost indispensable to his monarch as well as to his country, it must have been this last supreme proof of friendship shown to him by the sovereign lady of whom he had been so proud to be considered the knight and the defender.

Both Alexander III. and his Consort had also contracted ties of warm friendship and affection with Prince and Princess Vladimir Obolensky. The latter, by birth a Countess Apraxine, had been the first lady in waiting of Marie Feodorovna, when she arrived in Russia as the future heiress to its Throne. After her marriage with Prince Obolensky, who until his death was head of the Imperial Household, the Countess continued to be treated with affection and familiarity by her august mistress. Her husband was a perfect gentleman and a most amiable man, whose death was a

great personal sorrow for the Emperor as well as for the Empress, who appreciated his sterling qualities and devotion to their person. The Princess has remained on most affectionate terms with Marie Feodorovna, and is one of the few persons left with whom the latter can speak of the events of the past.

The Empress had another intimate friend, Madame Hélène Scheremetieff, by birth a Countess Strogonoff, and the daughter of the Grand Duchess Marie Nicolaievna, by her morganatic marriage with Count Gregory Strogonoff. There was a time when Hélène Grigorievna, as she used to be called, exercised a great social influence in St. Petersburg. She was a very handsome woman, whose features bore a great likeness to those of her grandfather, Nicholas I. Unfortunately she died relatively young, and was extremely regretted by all those who had the opportunity of knowing her.

The Empress had a Master of the Household specially attached to her person, who was one of the most amiable men that St. Petersburg society could boast of. Prince John Galitzine was a most popular personage with everybody; no one among the smart set would have dreamt of giving an evening party or a dinner without inviting him to it, and no reception would have seemed successful if he had not been present. He had any amount of social talents, was an excellent actor and organiser of private theatricals, used to read aloud like Mounet Sully himself, and was often entreated in a certain small literary set to lecture on new books, comedies, or dramas. Prince John was the most discreet of men, and his devotion to the Empress equalled that of General

Tchérévine. There was nobody in the world for him above Marie Feodorovna, whom he helped in the many difficulties of her social task, in the most tactful manner possible. He knew everyone worth knowing, and though showing himself equally amiable to all, nevertheless avoided getting upon intimate terms with anybody, in order not to find himself obliged to speak of things he did not care to mention, and also to avoid having remarks attributed to him which he had never made.

When the Empress received in audience ladies from society, or deputations from far distant provinces came to present their respects to her, Prince Galitzine used to inform himself beforehand as to what ought to be known concerning these persons, and the information helped his Imperial mistress in her task, enabling her to say the most appropriate things to them. When he died he was universally regretted, and by no one more than Marie Feodorovna, who was always so eminently appreciative of any services rendered to her.

The present Dowager Empress was very fortunate at the beginning of her reign in being surrounded by people, all more or less remarkable in one way or another, who not only knew how to help her in her numerous and difficult duties, but who also contrived to make these duties seem easy and pleasant to her. She herself understood most admirably how to hold her Court, to give it dignity without stiffness, to make it attractive without allowing it to lose in either pomp or majesty; but she also succeeded in finding those who loyally seconded her efforts and were able to

retain the high places in her estimation in which she had placed them.

When Marie Feodorovna ascended the throne the post of Mistress of the Robes became almost immediately vacant, as the Princess Kourakine, who had been at the head of her household ever since her arrival in Russia, died shortly after the murder of Alexander II. Society wondered who would replace her, and great and general was the surprise of the public when it became known that this important position had been offered to and accepted by Princess Kotchoubey.

Princess Hélène Kotchoubey has been unquestionably one of the most remarkable women in Europe during the latter half of the nineteenth century. She was first married to Prince Belosselsky of Belozersk, by whom she had several children, amongst whom were Countess Paul Schouvaloff, the first wife of the General and Ambassador of that name, and the famous Princess Lise, or Lison Troubetzkoy, whose salon had at one time so much importance in Paris during the Presidency of M. Thiers. After her widowhood Princess Hélène had contracted a second marriage with Prince Basil Kotchoubey, who, however, died very shortly afterwards, and she thenceforth played a considerable part in the social life, not only of Russia, but also of foreign countries. Princess Hélène contrived to get upon intimate terms with most of the crowned heads of Europe, and to grace with her presence nearly all the Royal and Imperial Courts worthy of her attention.

William I. treated her as a personal friend, and the late Queen of Denmark, whose remarkable insight

enabled her to quickly appreciate the qualities and defects of all those with whom she came into contact, had at once recognised and rendered justice to the singular aptitude of the Princess Hélène, and warmly commended her to her daughter when the latter became the Tsarina of all the Russias.

Princess Kotchoubey belonged to the old school, with superb, grand manners, whose politeness was just as refined as it was cool, according to the necessities of the moment, who possessed all the traditions of former times, understood all the different finesses and shades of social conventions, and who held ideas of greatness concerning the manner in which a Royal Court ought to be conducted that could only add to the splendour of the one over which she found herself called upon to preside. During the years that she filled the responsible position of Mistress of the Robes to Marie Feodorovna she gave to the Winter Palace an air of dignity and state such as has not been seen since her death. Of small stature, yet she appeared almost tall, so straight did she hold herself, and so queenly was her whole bearing.

She knew the Almanach de Gotha by heart, as well as what was due to each individual with whom she had to deal. She was a valuable guide to the Empress at the beginning of the latter's reign, and displayed consummate tact in her delicate functions. No one who saw her at Moscow during the festivities that took place there at the time of the Coronation will ever forget the amiable way in which she did the honours of the Kremlin, and received the numerous foreign visitors who assembled in the capital of the

Tsars at that memorable time. Her talents, experience, and knowledge of the world revealed themselves in all their perfection, and her presence at the side of the beautiful and gracious Empress was of immense help to the latter amidst the complicated duties which she found herself called upon to perform.

Unfortunately, the Princess Kotchoubey, who was already old and in frail health at the time she was appointed Mistress of the Robes, did not occupy that position long. She died at the beginning of the year 1888, and St. Petersburg society has never seen, since she was removed from its midst, a person who could be compared to her, so completely has this type of a really great lady disappeared in general from the social horizon of Europe.

Princess Hélène's place was given after her death to the Countess Paul Strogonoff, who was scarcely known in St. Petersburg, her whole life having been spent in Moscow. She was also a very great lady, but she had but little knowledge of the world, and though full of the best intentions, was incapable of taking over the succession of the eminent woman who had preceded her. She was, however, truly kind, and very amiable, as well as incapable of harming any one, and her appointment did not give rise to criticism. Though one related with a mischievous smile her small social mistakes, she was generally liked, if only for her devotion to the person of the lovely and loved young Empress over whose Court she presided.

CHAPTER V

HIGH SOCIETY IN ST. PETERSBURG

AT the time I am writing about, society life in St. Petersburg was as pleasant as in any of the European capitals. It also offered to the visitor great attractions from an intellectual point of view. One could go every evening to one house or another, where, without any ceremony, and in the intimacy of a small circle, one could spend an hour or two discussing with perfect liberty all the questions of the day, were they political or social. The Government did not object to being criticised, and did not exercise any control over the conversations carried on in privileged circles.

In this respect, considerably more freedom was allowed in St. Petersburg than in Berlin at the time Prince von Bismarck was at the head of affairs. The great world—because that is all I am speaking of here—was imbued with feelings of deep devotion to the person of the Sovereign, who, being well aware of this, did not care if a few sharp tongues indulged in censure of his ministers. It must, however, be added that never, even in the most unconstrained conversations, was the name of the Emperor mentioned, and no one would have dared to discuss anything about which his ideas and opinions were known to the public.

Politics, academically speaking, were very much to the fore during the whole reign of Alexander III., and they absorbed a great deal of the attention of those who took an interest in the events of the day. One eagerly commented on them : approved or blamed the decisions taken by the Government, but only when one found oneself alone and, so to speak, in one's family circle. Whenever a foreigner appeared, people used to relapse into silence, as if by common accord. The Diplomatic Corps, that had enjoyed considerable social importance in the reign of Alexander II., had been entirely thrown into the background under his successor, who did not care to see strangers introduced into the home life of his subjects, and the custom had gradually spread of talking Russian almost exclusively in preference to French, the language formerly used. This, too, had contributed to keep diplomats aside, so that the post of St. Petersburg, which for a long time had been eagerly sought after, was coveted no more, and young attachés or secretaries no longer cared to be sent to the Russian capital. From a certain point of view, this retirement into which Russian society withdrew had its advantages; it also had drawbacks, as contact with foreigners is necessary to a great nation, in order to broaden its ideas.

St. Petersburg was not given to gossip, especially ill-natured gossip such as one used to hear in Berlin, and even in certain select sets of the Faubourg St. Germain in Paris. One could lead a very pleasant life there, provided one knew how to choose one's friends, and as I have said before, there were plenty of opportunities other than at large and

official receptions of seeing people under agreeable conditions.

An amusing memory of those times was the manner in which middle-aged ladies adopted elderly habits, and as soon as their daughters were of an age to enjoy balls and dances, the mothers—many of whom were not yet fifty—appeared as chaperons, in elderly attire with high dresses and lace caps, which were altogether amusing. The type has almost, if not entirely, disappeared, but in the early years of the reign of Alexander III. it was rampant.

Patriarchal life also had not died out in certain circles; for instance, in the family of Count Serge Scheremetieff, in that of the old Countess Moussine Pouschkine, a lady of honour to the Empress, at the Woronzoffs, and in a few other houses. We used to assemble there on certain solemn occasions, such as New Year's Eve, Easter night, on the anniversaries of the birthday of the hostess, often on Sundays for dinner, and in any case twice or three times a week in the afternoons. Old traditions were strictly adhered to, calls were obligatory in cases of marriages, births, or deaths, and a certain etiquette was prescribed and followed, imposed by the old people and obeyed by the young. All this has come to an end, and one can find traces of it hardly anywhere but at the Countess Moussine Pouschkine's. This, in my opinion at least, is because I shall always hold that it is necessary to have, in a world that prides itself upon being considered polished, old ladies to remember and observe its traditions, as well as to impose habits of a politeness that to-day it has become a habit to treat but lightly.

One used then to go in the evening to see Countess Lewachoff, an aunt of mine who at one time exercised a considerable influence over St. Petersburg society; old Countess Sophy Tolstoy, the wife of the Minister of the Interior; Madame Schébéko; Madame Nelidoff; M. Gontscharoff, member of the Council of State, whose wife was one of the most amiable and kindest women in the world; Princess Paschkievitch, the beautiful Princess Marie Obolensky, and many other great ladies. At their houses one met nearly always the same three or four people every day, with whom one could spend a most pleasant hour, and where one was always received with equal kindness, whether one arrived in morning dress or in a ball gown, before attending some important function that required it. Receptions generally beginning extremely late, one was glad to be able to beguile the hours between nine and twelve o'clock in such congenial society.

Madame Nelidoff was a charming woman in her way. She had never been pretty, and had never even aspired to be considered so. She had a wonderful intelligence which gave her considerable influence over several statesmen. They often consulted her, and always had reason to congratulate themselves on having done so. She had a particular talent for keeping conversation going on any subject, and did so without ever talking much herself, by simply giving others the necessary lead. Her house at one time had been a great political centre, and assumed an importance which perhaps it did not quite deserve. Though it lost influence partly after the accession of Alexander III. on account of the semi-disgrace in which were

involved several people who had been among its daily visitors, and who found themselves obliged to leave Russia for a while, one always liked to go and see its mistress, and to hear her talk on the events of the day with an animation and brightness in which she had no equal.

Countess Lewachoff was very different from Madame Nelidoff. She was also a person of considerable intelligence and even wit, extremely cultivated, well read, and up in everything that was going on, not only in Russia but also in Europe generally. She used to read a great deal, and sometimes she mixed different things up in her mind; but she had plenty of resource, was very amiable and kind-hearted, and always ready to help others and to make herself useful. Her house, which was open to her friends three times a week, was thronged by foreigners passing through St. Petersburg, in addition to its own small circle of faithful visitors. One was certain whenever one spent an hour there to be informed of everything that was going on, be it in the official or the smart world; and one was never bored in her company.

The Countess Tolstoy confined her receptions strictly to her own family circle, but as the latter was very large, one always found oneself in a numerous company. The Countess was kindness itself, and it was considered a great honour to be admitted to her house. She had an only daughter, a pleasant woman of more than ordinary intelligence, who was married to Count Serge Toll, now member of the Council of State.

Madame Schébéko, whose husband was the head of the gendarmes' special corps, was one of the persons

whom I cared most to go and see. I have never met anyone so discreet, as regards social relations, or having such an intense dislike for any kind of useless and mischievous gossip. She had a lovely daughter-in-law, who in recent years graced the Russian Embassy in Vienna, where her husband, M. Schébéko, the son of my old friend, was Ambassador.

I never met the Princess Paschkievitch, who at the time when I used to go out into society had already retired from it, and lived in seclusion. She had made a museum of her house, so full was it of rare works of art; but all those who frequented it were unanimous in their praises of the distinguished woman who was its mistress. She translated into French the two principal novels of Tolstoy, "War and Peace" and "Anna Karénina," and was herself a writer of no mean talent. Unfortunately, she used to lead a most retired existence, and received no one outside a very small circle of friends. The Princess, who is still alive, and who divides her time between her house in St. Petersburg and her splendid castle of Homel in the Government of Mohilew, is the sister of Count Woronzoff Dachkoff.

The Princess Marie Obolensky, in spite of the years that had passed over her head, was still beautiful. She kept open house, where one could go every day at tea time. Her parties were considered extremely dull—not without reason, it must be owned; but she was herself so kind, so amiable, and sincerely glad to greet her visitors, that to give her pleasure one felt obliged to go and bore oneself in her company from time to time.

Count and Countess Pahlen

There was another house in St. Petersburg, presided over by a very distinguished lady, where it was most difficult to gain an entrée. It was that of the Countess Pahlen, the wife of Count Constantine Pahlen, formerly Minister of Justice under Alexander II., and one of the most eminent statesmen in Russia during the latter half of the last century. The Countess was fond of society, though at one time, when her husband retired from public life, she declared that she had had enough of it. However, she never entirely closed her doors to her numerous friends and acquaintances. At the time of the coronation of Alexander III., as well as that of the present Tsar, Count Pahlen filled the important functions of Grand Master of the Ceremonies, and the Countess used to welcome every evening the numerous foreigners that these two important events had called to Moscow, as well as the members of St. Petersburg society who had gone there on these memorable occasions. It would be difficult to find anywhere a more perfect and dignified hostess than she showed herself. She was one of those great ladies of former times who were always polite without ever showing any familiarity, with a superb manner and grand looks.

The diplomats, who were but rarely admitted into the home circles of the different houses which I have just described, used to take refuge in that of the Countess Delianoff, the wife of the Minister of Public Instruction. Her *salon* was for them a centre of reunion that they have sadly missed since the death of that amiable and agreeable woman. Countess Delianoff was by birth an Armenian, and a perfect type of

the race to which she belonged, having a long, hooked nose and very dark complexion. She was possessed of many minor but harmless eccentricities, but redeemed them by her sincere kindness and amiability. Few people remember her now, which is a pity, and shows much ingratitude, because her only thought in life was to make herself, as well as her house, pleasant to others.

She cared for nothing better than to be always surrounded by her numerous friends, and used to receive every afternoon between five and six o'clock. Her hours were very strict, for if one arrived at three minutes to five or at three minutes past six, one was not admitted. She used to give perfect dinners and frequent receptions, where one was literally crushed to the condition of a pancake, as she always invited about five times as many people as her relatively small rooms could accommodate. But the greater the crush the more delighted she felt. An excellent woman all things considered, invariably polite and obliging and ready to help others, and an altogether popular hostess, her house constituted a landmark in St. Petersburg society, and when its doors closed the city lost a great deal from the social point of view.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL LIFE IN ST. PETERSBURG

PUTTING aside the small and select receptions which I have just described, social life in St. Petersburg was very brilliant and animated during the season. Frequent festivities took place at Court, and seven to eight balls were regularly given, either at the Winter or the Anitchkov Palace, where the Emperor and Empress resided between New Year and the beginning of Lent. These balls and another small dance at the Palace of the Ermitage were the most sought after, as it was considered a special privilege to be invited to them, and the number of guests was limited to three or four hundred people. The Grand Dukes also frequently received the upper ten thousand that constituted the cream of the society of the capital, and the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna gave several fancy-dress balls, one of which excited a good deal of talk owing to the magnificence of the costumes displayed for the occasion, and especially on account of the marvellous appearance of the Empress Marie Feodorovna in the dress of a Russian Tsarina of olden times, literally covered with the pick of the splendid crown jewels. One might have thought that this heavy attire would crush her; but, on the con-

trary, she wore it with such grace that it only added new attractions to her beautiful slight figure, and that evening can be reckoned as one of her greatest triumphs.

The Grand Duchess Serge gave some fine balls whilst she still lived in St. Petersburg, before her consort was appointed Governor-General of Moscow; and during her short married life the Grand Duchess Paul also proved a charming, excellent hostess, and showed great fondness for entertaining. She had a beautiful palace on the English Quay, which since her early death has been closed to the public.

The season usually began with a large reception on New Year's Day, where ladies were expected to appear in the national dress with long Court trains. It took place in the morning, after Mass had been solemnised in the chapel of the Winter Palace. The Empress received the congratulations of the ladies belonging to Court society, who filed past her, kissing her hand as they did so.

The Imperial Family, who resided at their castle of Gatschine during the whole autumn, moved to St. Petersburg on New Year's Eve, and remained in residence until Lent. The series of great festivities opened very soon after with a ball, to which something like six thousand people were asked, that took place in a vast hall that went by the name of Nicholas Hall, from a large, life-size portrait of the Emperor Nicholas I., which constituted its principal ornament.

The first ball was remarkable for the fact that it was only official people and functionaries of superior

rank who were invited to it, so that sometimes the smartest people happened to be excluded, owing to the fact that they had not the Tchin entitling them to an invitation. To anyone unacquainted with the intricacies of Russian etiquette, this may appear strange, and it must therefore be explained that, according to regulations existing since the reign of Peter the Great, it is only the four first classes of the Tchin that are allowed to attend official Court functions. Unfortunately, these four classes are sometimes composed of people whose services have gained their promotion, but who are absolutely ignorant of the customs and manners of the upper society, who would never dream of having any relations with them beyond purely official ones. The result is that a Prince Galitzine or Mestchersky may not be allowed to enter the Winter Palace on certain occasions, whilst a M. Ivanoff or Petroff, which is the equivalent of the English Jones or Smith, finds himself an honoured guest of his Sovereign.

It was for the especial benefit of these Joneses and Smiths that the large ball about which I have just spoken was given, and it was curious to watch the people invited to it — people one would never have the occasion to meet again, or to see anywhere else but at this particular function, which constituted for their wives and daughters the one solitary opportunity they had of looking upon their Sovereigns, if only from a distance. They collected together in a great band, and, supremely conscious of their own importance, marched like a battalion of infantry, brushing aside all those who stood in their path.

Happily oblivious of anyone else but themselves, and equally unconscious of the spectacle their own bulky persons presented, clad as they were in extraordinary dresses and bejewelled uniforms, sparkling with decorations, their one ambition was to capture the best place at supper. The crush was generally terrible on these occasions, and it was most difficult to find one's way or to move about, especially in the ballroom itself, as well as in a long gallery that ran down its whole length, where tables were spread, and were continually surrounded by hungry or thirsty people.

I remember that at one of these balls I was going down to supper on the arm of a cousin of mine, Count Toll, the son-in-law of Count Tolstoy, then Minister of the Interior. Before us walked a couple entirely unknown to us, consisting of a very high civil functionary, to judge by his uniform, and a very stout lady, whose manners left much to be desired, and whose loud, vulgar voice betrayed a sorry lack of education. She was hanging on to the epaulettes of a young officer who was walking in front of her, also with a lady on his arm, and kept saying to her companion, "Hold on tight to me; I am going to stick to the epaulettes of this little colonel, and he will pull us through!" The "little colonel" was none other than the Heir to the Throne, the Grand Duke Tsarevitch, Nicholas Alexandrovitch, who, with one of the daughters of Count Woronzoff Dachkoff, was wending his steps toward the supper rooms.

I relate this incident, not only because it is amusing, but because it proves how very little smart society was known to the people invited

to this official function, seeing that even the appearance of their future Emperor was unfamiliar to them.

Talking of the Taynoie Sowietnikis (Privy Councillors), by which name this crowd was playfully called in smart circles, reminds me of another delightful story, that was related one winter, and which caused general amusement at the time it occurred. When the Marquis de Montebello was appointed French Ambassador at the Russian Court, and gave his first official reception, the cards for this entertainment, as is usual in such cases, were sent to the very same people who were on the list of those officially admitted at Court by virtue of their official rank. These invitations were issued in French, and ran thus: "L'Ambassadeur de France, ayant présenté ses lettres de créance à S.M. L'Empereur, prévient M. —— qu'il sera chez lui le ——." ("The French Ambassador, having had the honour to present his credentials to H.M. the Emperor, gives notice to M. —— that he will be at home on ——.")

A very important personage among the Tchinownikis, not being well up in the intricacies of the French language, on receiving such a card, imagined that the words "sera chez lui" ("will be at home") meant that the Ambassador was going to pay him a visit, and rushed to the Embassy to explain that he was quite overwhelmed at the honour which the representative of the French Republic was going to do him, but that he did not live in a house fit to receive such an important guest, consequently he begged His Excellency to give up the idea of honouring him with

his presence. I do not vouch for the truth of this anecdote, but it caused much mirth at the time it was put into circulation.

The smart set were always in full force at the three other dances, which were given in a circular room, called the concert hall. On these occasions the room was quite fairy-like in its magnificence and in the brilliancy of the dresses and jewels displayed. The suppers especially were most wonderful, and the Nicholas Hall, where they were served, was transformed for the occasion into a winter garden. Gigantic palms from the Imperial hothouses were set in long avenues all down the room, and from the centre of each table rose a fine specimen, the trunk of which was surrounded by splendid flowers. Everywhere banks of roses, tulips, and other sweet-smelling blossoms were strewn about, and a carpet of hyacinths was spread at the foot of the Emperor Nicholas's portrait, opposite which was placed the table at which sat the Empress, together with the Grand Duchesses and foreign ambassadors. I have seen many fine receptions in my life, but I have never been at any festivity approaching in splendour and luxury these balls, often called "Palm Balls," in allusion to the main feature of the decorations.

The Empress used to dance a great deal and to amuse herself most frankly and heartily. It is a long time now since the Winter Palace witnessed receptions the like of which I have just described, but even if they ever took place again it is doubtful whether they would be the same, now that the gracious, exquisite Marie Feodorovna would be no longer there in all the

splendour of her youth and with her childlike capacity for enjoyment.

These balls were considered small, inasmuch as scarcely more than one thousand invitations were issued for them. In former times the number was even smaller, but it gradually increased and the whole Diplomatic Corps was asked to them. Another ball used to be given which was exclusively attended by local Russian society, and, with the exception of the Ambassadors, no foreigner was ever admitted.

The balls at the Anitchkov Palace, where the Sovereigns resided, were only attended by the people whom the Empress knew well enough to treat as friends, and they did not differ in the least from receptions such as any rich private person might give.

The season was generally closed by a lunch followed by a dance, at the Yelaguine Palace, on one of the islands that environ St. Petersburg. This came to an end punctually at midnight on the last Sunday of carnival, and immediately it was over the Court was transferred again to Gatschina, the palace that the Emperor preferred to all his other residences. The Sovereigns frequently attended the receptions of a few private persons whom they honoured with their friendship, such as the Counts Scheremetieff, Count and Countess Woronzoff Dachkoff, Count Orloff Davidoff, and Prince Youssoupoff; and one of the smartest balls that was ever given for the Empress, at the beginning of her reign, took place at Count and Countess Steinbock Fermor's. I can still see Marie Feodorovna making her entry into the ballroom, on the arm of her host, dressed in a soft pink

gown, with clouds of tulle thrown carelessly over her satin petticoat, long sprays of moss roses looped up here and there, a marvellous parure of rubies and diamonds shining on her neck and on the bodice of her dress, and a splendid tiara in her dark hair. In that brilliant array one felt almost tempted to forget the Sovereign in one's admiration of the woman, so lovely was she. The Emperor, together with his Consort, also attended festivities at the foreign Embassies.

Apart from these receptions, all of which were more or less official ones, there was a great deal of dancing in the Russian capital, especially among the young people. The number of balls for girls and debutantes surpassed by far those given in honour of young married ladies. The latter used to console themselves by organising sledge parties, which generally ended with a cotillon in one or other of the numerous restaurants.

Large private balls were not of frequent occurrence, and the most luxurious ones took place at the house of two old maids, the sisters Netchaieff, who occupied, together with their brother, M. Netchaieff Maltseff, one of the richest men in St. Petersburg, a splendid house in the Sergievskaya Street, arranged and furnished in the worst of taste, but with the greatest luxury. They were the best women in the world, these sisters, but, like their brother, were most ridiculous in their manners. Far advanced in the sixties, they dressed in quite a juvenile fashion, and always alike, just as if they had been young girls first coming out in society. One of them was short and stout, the

other tall and thin, and both were painfully lacking in good looks, which added to the singularity of their clothes.

But with it all they were both excellent, kind, charitable creatures, who did an enormous amount of good without any fuss or ostentation. They were not so modest, however, about their money. Having been brought up far from St. Petersburg, and in an extremely unpretentious way—their millions having come to them late in life through the death of a distant relation—they had not become used to their riches. They gave most excellent dinners to sixty or seventy people, at which were served all the delicacies of the season, the price of which they hastened to tell their guests. One laughed at them and at their brother, but everybody flocked to their receptions. It is a long time now since they departed for a better world, and the beautiful Netchaieff house is closed, having passed into the possession of a nephew of its former owners, M. Elim Demidoff, Prince of San Donato, the owner of the vast Demidoff estates, who, being Russian Minister at the Court of Athens, does not live at present in St. Petersburg. He is married to the third daughter of Count Woronzoff Dachkoff, and that marriage being childless one wonders to whom the Netchaieff millions will eventually lapse.

M. Netchaieff Maltseff, who died some months ago, made the most noble use of his great riches. It was he who organised the Alexander III. Museum in Moscow, and most of the charitable institutions in Russia have found in him a magnificent and generous patron. This would amply suffice to forgive him

more serious things than the small peculiarities that used to afford such amusement to St. Petersburg society.

The three Netchaieffs were typical figures that rose on the social horizon of the Russian capital. One saw them everywhere, and in spite of their age the sisters even liked to be invited to dances given for quite young debutantes, where they honestly believed it was their duty to be present. They sincerely considered themselves in their right place, which was true enough in a certain sense, since kindness, amiability, and cheerfulness are never out of place anywhere. It should be added that in the days when I myself used to go out a great deal into society there was in St. Petersburg a circle of old people who were as fond of dances as the Netchaieff sisters, and they composed one of its most agreeable elements. For instance I have never met anywhere a pleasanter, more amiable, and entertaining man than my late uncle, General Timascheff, formerly Minister of the Interior, in the reign of Alexander II., a sculptor of talent and a distinguished mind, whose presence was eagerly sought at all the receptions of the winter season. How pleasanter by far was his conversation than that of many young men, who believed themselves quite irresistible.

Thinking of him, as well as of many others belonging to his generation, I cannot help remarking that among the survivors of the times of Alexander II., and especially among the members of his military household, there were many pleasant people, who, in spite of their relatively advanced age, were preferred to

younger ones by women, on account of the politeness and amiability with which they treated them.

It is sad to have to say so, but the present generation seems to have forgotten that exquisite courtesy which constituted such a particular feature of St. Petersburg society, which at the time I am writing about was without exception the most polished and polite in Europe. Now, as elsewhere, good manners are considered old-fashioned and out of date in the Russian capital, but personally I cannot help regretting the times when slang was unknown, and women were pleased to be honoured with attentions that never compromised them in the least.

CHAPTER VII

A FEW SALONS OF OLD

IN those years of the early 'nineties, there existed still in St. Petersburg a few *salons* modelled after those of Paris at the time of the Restoration. Admission was eagerly sought, for an invitation was considered to make assured the social position of their visitors. One of these *salons* was that of Madame Emmanuel Narischkine (*née* Tchitchérine)—Aunt Sacha, as she was familiarly called in her exclusive circle. Madame Narischkine rejoiced in the possession of a considerable number of enemies. I have always wondered why this was the case, because personally I have always found her charming, good, and kind. She was enormously rich, and, thanks to her husband, whom she had married when he was already very old, and to his social standing in the world, she was in possession of a position of outstanding influence which she succeeded in improving by her own personal qualities.

A little abrupt in her manners, and certainly too frank in her language, she had a straightforward, honest character that was incapable of being influenced by the prejudices of others; she liked to judge things on her own account, and whilst she spontaneously extended her sympathies to those whom

she liked, she did not spare those who had fallen under her displeasure.

Madame Narischkine used to give magnificent balls in honour of the Empress Marie Feodorovna, to which she invited only the personal friends of the young Sovereign and her own particular set. Since the death of M. Emmanuel Narischkine, his widow has been living a retired existence, given up almost exclusively to good deeds and kind actions, of which the public knows nothing beyond what it may hear by chance or by accident.

The name of Narischkine reminds me of the famous Basil Narischkine, whose follies were so closely connected with the French Second Empire. I also knew him, though very slightly, and I remember having once taken my eldest daughter to a ball which he gave for his own daughter's coming out. It was quite an event in the social life of St. Petersburg, being the first time for years that the doors of the fine Narischkine house had been thrown open to society.

Its treasures in pictures and works of art, collected with such knowledge and care, were not often to be seen, because ever since his marriage with a beautiful Circassian Princess he had become a lover of his fireside, and, surrounded by his wife and children, seemed to have entirely forgotten the gaieties of his youth, when, in a game of écarté at the Jockey Club, he had staked half a million on a single card against the luck of the Turk Khalil Bey and other lords of the like importance, the remembrance of whom lived in the annals of that long-removed Café Anglais.

Basil Narischkine was an exceedingly pleasant man with a fascinating personality, in spite of his extreme ugliness. He was keenly, delicately clever, with more knowledge of the world and more experience than most of his contemporaries, to which he added a certain air of scepticism and indulgent irony that rendered his conversation extremely interesting and curious. At least, that was how he impressed me on the only occasion I had of talking to him, which occurred on the night of the ball I have alluded to, when he showed me personally many of the art treasures he had collected, and cherished almost as closely as he did his children. The Narischkine house still stands, but its master is dead. His widow and sons occupy the mansion when they are in Russia, but they spend the greater part of the year abroad.

There was another house in St. Petersburg it is impossible to pass by in silence. It deserves to be mentioned with respect if only on account of its strict exclusiveness, otherwise than for a mere visit of ceremony. It was that of the Princess Elizabeth Bariatinsky—the Princess Betsy, as she was called by her intimate friends, "Princess Château," as she had been nicknamed by those who were not included among the people she liked to have around her. I have never been able to discover the origin of this singular appellation, but it was currently bandied about town, and one day a newly-arrived diplomat, not acquainted with the small mysteries of social life in St. Petersburg, asked the Princess point blank what castle she was named after, as he could never remember it. The reader may imagine how the remark was received.

I hasten to add that though the story was repeated everywhere, I assume no responsibility for its accuracy.

The Princess Bariatinsky was by birth and position one of the greatest ladies in Russia. She bore herself regally, and her manners were a model in their way. In the black cashmere, of which her gowns were made almost continually since her widowhood, she looked every inch a queen, so imposing did she appear.

In her youth her house had been a centre of pleasant hospitality, and until her death she gave dinners that were celebrated for their excellence and for the amiability with which she welcomed her guests. Her kindness in regard to young people was above praise. I was very fond of her, and extremely grateful for the many kindnesses I experienced at her hands, and I shall always remember her with a respectful affection and sympathy. The house of the Princess had an importance in St. Petersburg it is almost impossible now to explain, so entirely have the conditions of existence changed since her death. Anyone who was not privileged to enter its doors felt somehow an inferior star in the social firmament of St. Petersburg, and yet the number of people admitted within its sacred precincts was relatively very limited.

I knew also the Princess's husband, Prince Vladimir Bariatinsky, a very amiable man, who died a few years before his wife. Their only son also died earlier than his mother. At present the pretty house in the Millionnaya Street, where she welcomed her friends with such simple cordiality, is nearly always closed. Her eldest daughter, to whom it now belongs and who is married to one of her cousins, also a Prince Bariatinsky,

comes but seldom to St. Petersburg, preferring to remain in Rome, where she spends each winter in her lovely villa.

The second daughter of the Princess Betsy, also called by that name, is the widow of a Count Schouvaloff, and lives in one of the most beautiful palaces in the capital. This palace on the Fontanka was the gift of the Emperor Alexander I. to his mistress, the famous Marie Antonovna Narischkine. The Countess Schouvaloff, like her mother was before her, is a very great lady of olden times, with grave, solemn manners; not pretty, but possessing a splendid figure, that age has not succeeded in spoiling. She is extremely charming, and perhaps the most hospitable person in St. Petersburg, frequently giving sumptuous balls and receptions that are considered the most important in the winter season.

But the most influential house the Russian capital can boast of is that of the Countess Marie Kleinmichel, which is the meeting place of the Diplomatic Corps, as well as of all the notable foreigners that ever arrive on the borders of the Neva.

The Countess is pretty and clever; she adores the world for the gossip that it brings to her, cares especially for politics, and is always admirably well-informed as to everything that takes place in her own country, as well as in the rest of Europe. Everybody knows her in every important capital, be it London, Paris, Vienna, or Berlin. She is most useful to her friends and most dangerous to her enemies, an amusing woman, possessing unusual talent. Her mother was my first cousin, and my best friend.

The Countess Solsky also gave very select receptions. The Princess Eugénie of Oldenburg often graced them with her presence, and they were always entertaining. But though the Countess was considered to be a very influential person in some quarters, one could hardly say that she kept open house, because her circle of friends and acquaintances was rather limited.

In spite of the considerable number of years that have elapsed since her death, I should like to mention Madame Marie Dournoff, the daughter of the Princess Hélène Kotchoubey. She was quite charming, not only as regards face and figure, but especially because of her sparkling wit, her brilliant conversation, her refined and delicate tastes, and the utter absence of affectation or of banality. There was a time when she exercised a real and great influence over St. Petersburg society; later on, however, she retired from the social whirl, and used to spend her time with a small circle of intimate friends. She was enormously rich and lived in a sumptuous house on the English Quay, which she was not destined to enjoy for many years, as she died whilst still young.

The smart set used also to meet at the house of Princess Alexandrine Lobanoff, the sister of the Princess Betsy Bariatinsky, an exceedingly clever woman. Then there was the *salon* of the Countess Alexandrine Tolstoy, a lady-in-waiting to the Empress, who had superintended the education of the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna, now Duchess Dowager of Coburg, also a very distinguished person, where most of the intellectual and literary world of St. Petersburg congregated. The notable writers of the day were

also to be seen often at the house of Mademoiselle Daria Toutscheff, the daughter of the poet of that name, and the sister of Madame Aksakoff, the widow of the famous Slavophil journalist. Mademoiselle Toutscheff was a person of lightning wit, who for many years was attached to the person of the late Empress Marie Alexandrovna. These two ladies lived at the Winter Palace, as also did the Countess Antoinette Bloudoff, another remarkable character, whose firm, strong intelligence could compete with that of the greatest thinkers of her time.

The Countess had been the intimate friend of my grandmother, and treated me always with a motherly tenderness. When she died after a long and painful illness, I experienced one of the great sorrows of my life, because I loved her with quite a filial affection, and used to go to see her almost daily.

Madame Catherine Balaschoff, the sister of the Countess Woronzoff Dachkoff, and a woman of exquisite natural grace, also gave receptions during the winter season. Her parties were numerous and very solemn but pleasant, principally on account of the extreme good taste that prevailed. The house in which she lived was sumptuous, and its arrangement admirable in the simple luxury prevailing.

The Princess Soltykoff also entertained largely before the marriage of her three daughters. She had been, and still was, one of the most beautiful women in Russia, and the youngest of four sisters, who had all been conspicuous for their good looks and cleverness. I will only mention briefly the receptions of Count and Countess Orloff Davidoff in their house

of the Sergievskaya, with its hospitable traditions. Their father and father-in-law, old Count Orloff Davidoff, whom I can still remember, used to give wonderful entertainments that were always honoured with the presence of the Emperor and Empress.

Young Princess Youssoupoff, the richest woman in Russia, sometimes opened the doors of her magnificent Palace of the Moyka to her friends, but did not do so often. Though blessed with all the good things of this earth, sorrow has not spared her, and since the tragic death of a beloved son she is seldom seen in society.

But without exception the most attractive personality in St. Petersburg was the late Princess Léonille Menschikoff, a brilliant, impetuous woman, of brusque manners and sharp tongue, and yet the greatest of great ladies. She lived more frequently abroad than in Russia, but sometimes made a short sojourn in the capital, where she gave one or two marvellous balls or entertainments. She was original, sometimes strange and bizarre in her tastes and mind, and she was endowed with a particular charm that was eminently distinctive.

CHAPTER VIII

PRETTY WOMEN AND AMIABLE MEN

IN the 'eighties there were many pretty women in St. Petersburg. I do not know whether it is the present fashion, or whether people's ideas as to beauty have changed, but it seems to me that what was considered to be lovely at the time of my youth no longer constitutes beauty, nor are there so many good-looking women as there were twenty or thirty years ago. One reason, I think, is that sport, to which girls are so devoted, has robbed them of a good deal of the old-time feminine grace. They can neither walk, nor dance, nor move about with the ease and the dignity of their mothers and grandmothers. Sharpness in tone as well as in manners has taken the place of the softness and politeness of former days. The fashions of to-day are not becoming; even at the risk of being called old-fashioned I cannot help regretting the slender, willow waists which were the vogue when I was young.

It would be next to impossible to mention by name all the beautiful faces that added so much brilliance to every fashionable entertainment of the period. I shall, however, try to recall a few. One of the loveliest creatures I ever met was Madame Catherine Tolstoy, called Kitty by her friends. Her Madonna-like features and straight profile were the despair of any painter

who attempted to reproduce them on canvas or paper. The Duchess de Sermoneta was perhaps more regularly beautiful, the Countess de Villeneuve more dazzling, to mention only these two; but neither of them possessed the sweet, wonderful eyes that made Madame Tolstoy so extraordinarily fascinating, nor had they her indescribable charm. With all her physical qualities, she was good, kind, amiable, sweet, and charming. These were the characteristics of her youth, and she has retained them to this day. Age has not destroyed the beauty of her features, and her white hair only adds to her attraction. If I were a man, I think I would commit any folly for the sake of Madame Tolstoy.

Of late sorrow has fallen upon Madame Tolstoy by the death of her husband. It is all the more sad because just before his death they had taken a pretty house in Paris, which she has furnished with consummate taste. She is a grandmother, and makes no secret of the fact, nor of the years that have passed over her head.

Princess Lise Volkhonsky, of whom I shall have something more to say presently, had also been in her youth a very handsome woman. Imposing and dignified in her manners, her bearing was that of a great lady. Of Zina Beauharnais, the lovely creature who broke so many hearts by her indifference, and was quite unconscious of the feelings which she inspired, I have already spoken. There were also the two Kourakine sisters, the daughters of the Princess Anatole Kourakine, the eldest of whom married Prince Shahovskoy, and is already a grandmother, whilst the

younger one is the wife of M. Schébéko, the Russian diplomat. They were both considered the prettiest girls in society, as well as the most charming.

Another lovely woman was little Princess Salome of Mingrelia, who later married Prince Obolensky, and who represented the Georgian type in all its purity. Madame Polovtsov, the adopted daughter of old Baron Stieglitz and heiress to his millions, had also been amongst the renowned beauties of her generation; I only met her when her daughters were my own age, but even then she could have rivalled many pretty women in their prime. Then there was Madame Scheremetieff (*née* Salovoy), in whose faultless features one could guess the brilliant loveliness that had been hers in her younger days, and whose daughter, the Baroness Knorring, resembles her by the charm of her manners, as well as by the beauty of her soft hazel eyes. In her youth Princess Youssoupoff had been considered a pretty woman. She was, too, so pleasant and amiable that she was considered one of the most popular women in St. Petersburg society. She was also the greatest heiress in Russia, the owner of fine palaces, estates, and jewels, accumulated by the several generations of millionaires from whom she had descended. Her only surviving son—the elder one having been killed in a duel under tragic circumstances a few years ago—married hardly a year ago the Princess Irene of Russia, only daughter of the Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna, and the granddaughter of the late Tsar Alexander III.

The most elegant and best-dressed woman in St. Petersburg was, and still is, the Princess Olga Orloff,

who is almost as well known in Paris and London as she is in Russia. She is no longer young, but irresistibly graceful. Her sister, the Princess Kotchoubey, whose husband is one of the personal friends of the present Emperor, was very beautiful in her youth; whilst their mother, the Princess Nadine Belosselsky, the sister of the Countess Zina Beauharnais, and of the famous General Skobeleff, was far handsomer than even her daughters, and one of the most celebrated beauties of her generation.

The daughters of Count Woronzoff Dachkoff were also pretty girls, though far from attaining their mother's loveliness. The Princess Annette Soltykoff, as well as her sister, the Princess Mary Dolgorouky, now Countess Benckendorff, have each been famous beauties.

Yes, a ball in St. Petersburg at that time was a pretty sight indeed! The women were attractive, either by their beauty or by their wit, and the men too—at least those whom one used to meet often in society—were pleasant, and did not avoid the society of ladies, as they so often do to-day. The military cadets and pupils of privileged schools, who at present constitute the most solid contingent of dancing men, were not at that time allowed to be present until they had completed their education.

The young officers in the various crack regiments went about a great deal in society, which they no longer do nowadays. The *chevaliers gardes*, of which regiment the Empress Marie Feodorovna was chief, were particularly in request at all entertainments in society. During the last years of the reign of the

late Emperor, the Preobrajensky Regiment, which had been commanded for a considerable time by the Grand Duke Serge Alexandrovitch, began to appear more than formerly at the smartest balls of the winter season, whilst it became fashionable for young men belonging by birth to the highest aristocracy to seek to join it. All these different elements made a ball in St. Petersburg, either at Court or in society, a very pretty thing to watch and to take part in.

I have mentioned pleasant men. Many of my old friends have died, such as one of the two Princes Ouroussoff. The eldest, Prince Julius, alone survives. Then there was General Count Alexander Moussine Pouschkine, one of the handsomest and most brilliant men of his time; and many others who, alas, are forgotten to-day.

It is quite impossible to think about these dead years without associating them with the Empress Marie Feodorovna. Time has sat lightly upon her, because she has kept her youthful looks in a quite marvellous way, and though she is past sixty, she scarcely looks more than thirty-five. Her beautiful eyes have been clouded by many bitter tears, but yet they have retained their expressive softness, and her smile the sweetness that made it so charming.

CHAPTER IX

PRINCESS LISE VOLKHONSKY

I HAVE mentioned that Princess Lise Volkhonsky deserves something more than a mere remembrance. She was one of the most remarkable women of her time, not only by reason of her beauty, but also for her many charms, her cleverness, and strength of character. She was the wife of Prince Michael Volkhonsky, the son of that Prince Volkhonsky who was sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia for having taken part in the plot still called in Russia the conspiration of the Decembrists, through which the Emperor Nicholas I. nearly lost his throne. Volkhonsky had been one of its leaders, and paid a heavy price for his error. His wife, refusing, to her honour, to accept her freedom, did not hesitate to share his fate, and in the snows of Siberia she lived for many years, cheering her husband's exile and giving birth to several children, one of whom became the husband of his lovely cousin, the Princess Lise.

Prince Michael Volkhonsky was restored to his father's titles and estates only during the reign of Alexander II., and he had a subsequent brilliant administrative career. He was *persona grata* at Court, very wealthy and clever, with rather a caustic turn of mind, but an exceedingly pleasant and interesting

talker. He was fond of entertaining, a taste that his wife shared with him, and the couple gave sumptuous receptions, at which the Emperor and Empress were frequently present. They had several sons, every one clever, especially Prince Sergius, who subsequently became Director of the Imperial Theatres, and his third brother, Vladimir, who for some years occupied the responsible position of Vice-president of the Duma. Their only daughter, Princess Mary, now lives most of the year in Rome, where so many Russians are domiciled.

Princess Lise Volkhonsky, as I have already said, was a cousin of her husband's, also a Princess Volkhonsky by birth. She had grave manners, but withal could be pleasant; she had the dignified demeanour of a queen, and could very well convey to the guests she entertained in her house that she had conferred a favour on them by inviting them to enter it. Her intelligence was quite out of the common, and would, I believe, have been even more appreciated than it was had she not been quite so pedantic.

When I knew her she was past middle age, so that I cannot say what she might have been in her youth, but at the time I was introduced to her she was extremely intolerant of the light conversations that compose the small talk one generally hears in society. She only cared to discuss grave and serious questions of world-wide interest, and she was more a humanitarian than a lover of humanity.

Her erudition was something wonderful; she could easily have put to shame many a studious old Benedictine monk. She had spent a considerable part of

her life in Italy, especially in Rome, where she had met many learned theologians and archæologists, and whenever she was able to return to Italy she sought their society with avidity. Pious by temperament and by nature, she had fallen under the influence of the Jesuits, and after having studied the history of the Roman Church under their guidance and inspiration, she wrote several remarkably clever monographs and books, advocating the union of the Greek and Catholic Churches, a subject that had always interested her, and which was very near her heart during the latter years of her life.

The end of these literary dreams was the conversion of the Princess to the Catholic faith, a thing which then was still a most rare incident among the Russian high aristocracy, where attachment to the religion of the country was considered indispensable to all well-born people. That conversion—which, it must be added, she did not flaunt before the eyes of her friends and family—became nevertheless known in society, where it caused a mild scandal. But the Princess was not subjected to annoyance concerning it, and it was really only at her death that the outside world became aware of the fact, through the necessity of burying her according to the rites of the faith she had embraced. Her husband would have greatly preferred to have her obsequies solemnised by the Greek Church, but there M. Pobedonostseff, the dreaded Procurator of the Holy Synod, interfered, and refused his consent to an act of hypocrisy, against which probably the ardent and straightforward soul of the Princess Lise would have been the first to revolt;

and so for the first time in the annals of the Volkhonsky family one of its most illustrious representatives was accompanied to her grave by the prayers of an alien Church.

Princess Lise was of an extremely autocratic character; she would not brook contradiction, no matter in what shape or form it presented itself to her. She had, I believe, a very high opinion of her own intelligence, though she did not show it openly; she nevertheless contrived to make for herself many enemies through the disdainful manner in which she treated the people who seemed to her to be not on her own mental level. But once she felt a sympathetic attraction to anyone, she gave a strong and faithful friendship, which never swerved in its loyalty through good report or ill. She was slightly disdainful of others, but though she did not care to show it, it became difficult for her not to do so, because she was frankness itself, and the honesty and straightforwardness of her character did not allow her to dissemble.

It would have been difficult to meet a woman more abreast of the literary movement of her time. No serious or important book, whether in her own language or another, remained unknown to her, and one could not help sometimes wondering where she found the time to read so many books studiously, for she was able to tell you by heart the subject-matter of every volume that she had read.

Hasty in character but cold in demeanour, she was not easy to understand properly, and it was even more difficult to guess her thoughts or to realise all

the passions that fought against each other in her ardent soul. When once one had met her it was impossible to remain indifferent where she was concerned, and one could only either love or detest her, but no matter which of these two feelings she inspired, one always felt interested. She was entirely different from the ordinary run; sometimes she was hard, sometimes hasty, and ever stubborn; but with it all, noble, great, generous, and grand, with an utter absence of meanness.

Princess Volkhonsky received a small circle of friends in the early hours of the evening, apart from the large entertainments that she gave, which became somewhat more scarce in the last years of her life, and if one had had the honour to be asked to enter that circle, some remarkably entertaining hours were spent at her fireside. In my mind's eye I can still see that large room hung with red silk, not overcrowded with furniture, and rather stiff in arrangement. Princess Lise's wide arm-chair was placed close to a round table, on which stood a lamp with its large shade. It was then that one found the best opportunity of studying her and listening to her grave, serious talk, and in such moods she sometimes allowed the secret of her inner thoughts to escape her, and permitted others to read into her soul. It was during these quiet evenings she revealed herself as a totally superior woman, devoid of prejudices and preconceived notions, absorbed in the highest problems of the human heart and thought.

The Princess, perhaps on account of her conversion to Catholicism, liked to have members of the Roman

clergy about her, and, as I have already mentioned, used to indulge in dreams concerning the eventual union of the Latin and Greek Churches. One of her most frequent visitors was the famous philosopher, Vladimir Solovieff, whose grave and wonderful intelligence harmonised so well with her own. Solovieff was a most curious type. His ascetic face, with its long, falling hair, offered a vague likeness to the head of Christ such as it appears to us on the veil of Veronica, and such as it had been preserved to us by tradition. Solovieff also spent his existence dreaming impossible dreams, and though deeply religious, had, I believe, no religion in the sense that ordinary people attribute to that word. He used to live in very high regions of human thought, engrossed in metaphysical studies, longing after an era of universal peace and general concord of all the nations of the world, and he too, as well as the Princess, indulged in the illusion of the possibility of a union of Rome with St. Petersburg, which he preached in all his works with a vehemence that often over-reached itself.

I met Solovieff very often at Princess Volkhonsky's, and I also saw him in my own house, where he used to come from time to time. He interested me deeply, though on many questions our opinions were diametrically opposed. I used to find him too idealistic by far, and I could not understand the vivacity with which he spent his strength in pursuing what I considered to be chimeras. But I liked to hear him talk, and his attitude of an Apostle exercised a great fascination upon me, as indeed upon all those who had the opportunity to observe his demeanour. In

hearing him expound his ideas and convictions one could easily transport oneself to the early days of Christianity at the time when the religion of Jesus was preached to the world by enthusiasts.

Solovieff used also to speak of the necessity of mortifying the flesh and of renouncing worldly joys, in the hope of an eternity of bliss; and one felt the influence of his words, even whilst one's mind refused to share the illusions that inspired him. He was perhaps the one man who could understand Princess Lise Volkhonsky, and so followed naturally their friendship for each other, as well as the sympathy that united their two hearts.

CHAPTER X

FAMOUS DIPLOMATS

FOR many years the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps in St. Petersburg was General von Schweinitz, who for seventeen years was the German Ambassador. Formerly he had been a member of the household of the Emperor Frederick III. in the days when Frederick was still Crown Prince. He had been very much liked by his Royal master, and was considered as one of his personal and most trusted friends. Indeed, Prince Bismarck at one time became alarmed as to the consequences this friendship might bring about, and General, then Colonel, von Schweinitz was obliged to abandon his post in order to take up a diplomatic appointment, first in Vienna and then in St. Petersburg. He was an exceedingly intelligent and clever man, who knew Russia intimately and was conversant with the intricacies of Russian politics. His character was frank and loyal; he worked with sincerity towards a thorough understanding between the Cabinet of St. Petersburg and that of Berlin, and he certainly saw farther than those who were at the head of the Russian as well as of the German Government. He was, moreover, imbued with the traditions of a former time, when the two reigning houses of Romanoff and Hohenzollern had been united by closest ties.

Prince Bismarck liked and respected him, and the Emperor Alexander III. had professed great esteem as well as friendship for him, following thus the example set to him by his father, of whom General von Schweinitz had been a favourite.

The General's aims were essentially of a pacific nature, and his great experience of public affairs was constantly at the service of the cause of peace. Nevertheless, thanks to external circumstances, he felt somehow that his position had changed, and requested his recall from St. Petersburg before the tide of French sympathy had carried everything before it, and forced upon him the feeling that his influence had become less powerful than that of Count de Montebello, to whose efforts, principally, was due the close intercourse of Russia with the Third Republic. Everybody was regretful when General von Schweinitz left Russia, his colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps, the Foreign Office, where he was as much liked as respected, and also Society as a whole, so popular had he always been. On the evening he started for Berlin the Warsaw railway station was crowded with people assembled to wish him good-bye.

He was succeeded in his delicate and difficult post by General von Werder, formerly military attaché, who had also been in Russia for many years, and whom his friends considered almost more Russian than German. He was one of the few people whom Alexander II. admitted to the intimacy of his family life, and allowed to become friends with his second wife, the Princess Yourievsky. General von Werder was kind-hearted, frank, sincere, incapable of deceiving

even a foe; a real soldier, with a soldier's frankness, which he often used and even sometimes abused. But it is to be questioned whether he was quite the man in the right place, or astute enough to discover and to fight intrigue. He was extremely fond of St. Petersburg, and was delighted when sent back to the banks of the Neva as an Ambassador. His joy was not long lived, however, because he was suddenly recalled in the most unexpected manner, both the Emperor William and the Chancellor, Prince Hohenlohe, having felt displeased at the want of foresight which he displayed when he had allowed the alliance with France to be concluded under his very eyes. He was therefore asked to retire, being made aware in an almost brutal manner that his services were no longer required. Prince Hohenlohe sent him, by special messenger, a letter bluntly signifying to him that he was to present his letters of recall immediately.

He was succeeded by Prince Radolin, a former favourite of the Iron Chancellor, and occupying a responsible position in the household of the Emperor Frederick III. Prince Radolin was a Pole, which fact accounts perhaps for his personification of the man "*ondoyant et divers*," of whom speaks old Montaigne. Apart from this, he had an engaging personality, and was the husband of a charming wife. But notwithstanding these two advantages and his large fortune, which allowed him to entertain on a considerable scale, he did not succeed in achieving popularity in St. Petersburg. He managed, in particular, to get into the black books of the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, who made no

secret of her enmity. No surprise was felt when he was transferred to Paris, where he spent a long time and made many more friendships than had been the case in Russia.

During the years I was in St. Petersburg, Austria had been successively represented by Count Volkenstein, the husband of Countess Schleinitz, and later on by Prince Francis of Liechtenstein, the brother of the reigning Prince of that name. He was as haughty as the Austrian nobility generally are, but concealed it under an amiable exterior. He represented his Sovereign very well, and had the reputation of being a shrewdly intelligent man, notwithstanding which he did not remain long in Russia. I think he never felt quite at home, and did not like being the cynosure of all eyes; it interfered with the liberty his independent character appreciated more than anything else. I have never met any of his successors.

I used to go very often to the English Embassy at the time when Sir Edward Thornton was at its head. Lady Thornton was an amiable woman with two exceedingly attractive daughters, and their house was a most agreeable one for their numerous friends. When Sir Edward was transferred to Constantinople he was succeeded in St. Petersburg by Sir Robert Morier, who had the reputation of being unusually clever and an enterprising diplomat. His daughter made a multitude of friends in the smart set of the capital.

I did not see much of the Moriers, who I believe did not consider me elegant enough to be admitted among their intimate friends; but I frequently visited their successors, Sir Edward and Lady Lascelles, under

whose auspices the English Embassy became one of the most charming houses in St. Petersburg, as well as one of the most entertaining; and Sir Edward was even one of the witnesses of the marriage of my second daughter with Prince Blücher von Wahlstadt.

It was towards the end of the reign of Alexander III. that Count and Countess de Montebello arrived in St. Petersburg, and they succeeded almost at once in making for themselves an unparalleled ambassadorial position. Under their predecessors M. and Madame de Laboulaye, the doors of the French Embassy had not often been opened, and its few functions had savoured of austerity and strict etiquette. When the Montebellos came, everything changed. They displayed lavish hospitality to the people they came to know very well, just as much as to those with whom they enjoyed but a passing acquaintance. The Countess was fond of society in general, and also fond of giving entertainments, which materially helped them to become very popular. She was enormously rich, being the granddaughter and only heiress of old Madame Chevreux Aubertot, the owner of one of the largest and best shops in Paris. The Countess, too, was clever, amiable, merry, with a great knowledge of the world, and a certain careless politeness; thus she reaped a considerable harvest of success, surpassing even her own highest expectations.

To visit the Montebellos' very soon became the one great thing, and any invitation to their house was eagerly accepted, equally by members of the Imperial family as by the most notable persons of the town and Court. The Countess possessed to perfection the art

of imparting animation to her receptions and of excluding stiffness; and it must be said, to her honour, that she was just as amiable and pleasant towards a functionary arriving from a distant province and believing himself obliged to pay a call at the French Embassy, as to any member of the most fashionable set in the capital.

Count de Montebello, who was slightly overshadowed by the effusive personality of his lively wife, was a diplomat such as they were supposed to be in olden times before the telegraph and telephone had in a certain sense done away with initiative. He had preserved the traditions of his youth, and was just as much absorbed by the exigencies of the protocol of etiquette as by those connected with the preservation of European peace. He was a quiet, sedate man, an excellent worker, and a polite, well-bred gentleman. His staff was devoted to him, because he showed much kind care for his subordinates, and was quite fatherly in regard to the young secretaries and attachés placed under his orders; indeed, wherever he went he succeeded in inspiring strong sympathies.

The mission of Count and Countess de Montebello in St. Petersburg during the ten years or so that it lasted contributed considerably to the consolidation of the Franco-Russian Alliance, and hastened its definite conclusion. They contrived to make themselves appreciated, and smoothed away by their tact certain unpleasant impressions that existed amongst Russian society even more than in Court circles, in regard to the French Government and the Republican regime.

When they were recalled, owing to jealousies which their growing popularity had evoked in France, their departure was sincerely regretted.

Beyond these successive occupants of the great ambassadorial posts, there were other interesting personalities in the diplomatic ranks. The Danish Minister was, perhaps, the most important, owing to the fact that he represented the native country of the Empress, and was consequently treated with particular distinction. For a long time General de Kjoers, who had some relationship to the Royal Family of Denmark, was in possession of the post, and was very much liked, not only at Court, but also in society. He was invited everywhere, and his daughters were also appreciated for their wit and charming manners. When the General died, his successor inherited the advantages of his position, but hardly his popularity.

Spain had been represented for more years than people cared to count by the Marquis de Campo Sagrado, the morganatic brother-in-law of Queen Isabella, married to her half-sister, the daughter of Queen Christina, and the Duc de Rianzares. The Marquis was about the stoutest man I have ever seen, and had all the joviality supposed to belong to fat persons. He was essentially *un bon vivant*, fond of good wines, good cheer, and pretty women, with whom he was a favourite, notwithstanding his immense corpulence. He had also contrived to be accepted in a set presided over by the Grand Duke Alexis, brother of the Emperor, and no fashionable entertainment took place without his being invited to it. He lived in St. Petersburg

as a lonely bachelor; the Marchioness, whose fortune he had spent, and whose heart he was said to have broken, had at last separated from him and settled at Biarritz. Two of his daughters, however, came to Russia one winter, and did the honours of the Spanish Legation for their father. They were both remarkably handsome, and excited a good deal of admiration wherever they went. The eldest one was already married to a Spanish grandee, Count Guendoulein; whilst the younger was united a few years later to a member of the Spanish Royal Family, Don Luis de Bourbon, Duke of Ansola. She became a widow very soon, and is at present married to a Spanish diplomat, Don Mendez de Vigo.

The Marquis de Campo Sagrado was fond of St. Petersburg, of its society, and of the position which he enjoyed in it; he would have asked nothing better than to be allowed to end his days in Russia; but unfortunately for him, his creditors, which were legion, were not of the same opinion, and began to clamour for their money with such energy that he had at last to leave Russia before having even presented officially his letters of recall, which were handed over by his successor, in order that he should remain until the end covered by his diplomatic immunity from pursuit by his irate creditors.

That successor was Count Villagonzala, a charming man, whose wide, fan-shaped beard gave rise to many jests in the worst possible taste. He entertained more than did the Marquis, and his cook deserves to be remembered with gratitude by all those who tasted his sauces. The Count was a perfect gentleman, and

a favourite with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, at whose five o'clock teas he put in an appearance almost every day.

As for Italy, its embassy was very animated whilst Baron Marochetti was at its head, and its honours were done by his amiable wife. I do not think I was ever at the Embassy after their departure; but whilst the Baroness presided over it I went to one or two balls which, by general consent, were considered to have been magnificent.

Sweden's representative at that time was Baron Reuterskjold, married to a very pleasant woman, who was at once received into the smartest set. The Netherlands Legation was in possession of Baron van Stoetwegen, a man of great, but caustic, wit, whose conversation was most entertaining even when it touched upon trivial subjects, but neither tinged with kindness nor with indulgence. I liked him very much, and cared for his wife too, who made a most amiable hostess. The couple gave excellent dinners, that deserve not to be forgotten.

There were other personalities among the diplomats accredited at that time at the St. Petersburg Court, whom I like to remember, because they were cultured and entertaining in conversation. Among them may be mentioned the Councillor of the Italian Embassy, Count Bottaro Costa, who was a general favourite; Count Vauvineux, first secretary at the French Embassy, an entirely charming man; and the German Councillor, Baron Tchirscky, quite recently their Ambassador in Vienna. His wife was one of the most attractive persons I have ever met, and who, living in a very pretty

apartment, frequently entertained their friends in a quiet way.

All these elements put together constituted a charming whole, and contributed to make St. Petersburg an agreeable place to live in, especially when, as was the case with me, one had as many friends among the Diplomatic Corps as among local society. Dullness could be easily avoided, and dull people equally so. The more I think of these years in my life, the more happy I feel to have lived them, and I cling to their remembrance as reminding me of something very nice, very pleasant, which perhaps one would not care to see revived, but which one would feel sorry indeed not to have known.

CHAPTER XI

JOURNALISM IN RUSSIA

WHEN the late Emperor Alexander III. ascended the throne, the most popular daily newspaper in Russia was the *Golos*, the controller of which was a man of infinite tact and high intelligence, M. Kraievski, who was thoroughly conversant with the state of the public mind as well as the process of evolution public thought was passing through. He edited his paper in the most liberal spirit, and without doubt its opinions had supreme weight in forming and directing public opinion during the critical transformation brought about in the moral and intellectual standard of the nation by the reforms of Alexander II., and later on by the recrudescence of Nihilism which followed the Turkish war.

M. Kraievski carried on the editorship of his paper together with his son-in-law, M. Bilbassoff, one of the most eminent historians since the days of Karamzine, the author of the admirable "History of Catherine II." Bilbassoff was not in the good graces of the government on account of his advanced political opinions. He was one of the most interesting men modern Russia had produced. I used to see him sometimes at the house of my good friends, the Wischnegradskys, where one could often meet him.

Every time I had the opportunity to have a talk with M. Bilbassoff I seized the occasion with no little alacrity. He had something of the spirit of criticism which I had had occasion to notice in John Morley, and before that in the great Ranke. He was inclined, as they were, to seek the explanation of certain facts in the causes from which they had evolved. His history of the great Catherine had been at first forbidden by the censor. This caused him to submit the manuscript to Alexander III., who read it with interest, and after having done so authorised its publication.

To return to the *Golos* and its proprietor. It was so widely read and well edited that the best writers of the day were proud to be allowed to contribute, and their sharp criticisms were feared even by strong and powerful ministers. It held its own against the famous Third Section whilst the latter still existed, and entirely led public opinion up and down the country. When Count Dmitri Tolstoy became Minister of the Interior in succession to Count Ignatieff, the *Golos* fell under the weight of his displeasure. It was suppressed, and with it the public lost a paper always well informed, always independent, and which, during its short but eventful career, had never sold its birthright, but had fearlessly gone its way, defending the liberal principles it represented.

After the suppression of the *Golos*, the *Novoie Vremia* began to shine, though not without difficulty, in the journalistic sky of St. Petersburg. Its owner, Alexis Souvoriñe, was not yet well known, and few believed he had enough talent to outrival Kraievski himself, who up to then had been considered as the father

of modern Russian journalism. Souvorine, however, possessed an immense intelligence, and knew by instinct what the public required at certain moments. In that he differed from the editor of the *Golos*, who wanted to lead public opinion. He understood that if he wanted to become popular he must allow public opinion to believe it led him and his paper, and that it expressed the wishes of the moment. Therein lay the secret of his success, and of the strength which the *Novoie Vremia* acquired under his leadership. Very soon it reached an assured position, and it has kept it to this day, notwithstanding the fact that at present it is a purely official and governmental organ, which, in justice to Souvorine, it must be said it never was in his lifetime. Souvorine was a genius in his way, and no journalist has mastered better than he did the intricacies inseparable from his profession, or has known better how to guess the fluctuations of the mind of the public with whom he had to deal. Under his management, the *Novoie Vremia* became the one indispensable newspaper, especially to those deeply interested in public affairs. It was found everywhere, even in the hands of people utterly opposed to its opinions. Souvorine has been accused of opportunism. This accusation was not quite unjust in regard to the direction which he gave to his organ, but it could not be applied to his personal opinions. These varied but seldom, and perhaps less than they would have done had he considered with more attention, and less from the point of view of the proprietor of a journal, the history of his country during the eventful years when he was bombarding abuses needing

redress, and exposing false ideas requiring modification. In the *Novoie Vremia*, however, he held that he ought to watch and to follow the transformations of the public mind, and to express the opinions and ideas of its readers.

He was not quite wrong in this if one takes into consideration that his principal care was the material prosperity of his paper, and that the latter could only remain assured if it was upheld by its readers and subscribers, as well as by the mass of general opinion. No one in Russia had realised this fact before him, and each unit of the press, especially the daily papers, had always looked upon itself as the apostle of the principles professed by its editors, without considering in the least its public.

One must not forget that at the time I am writing Russian experience in journalism was most limited, and perhaps this was why so many journalistic ventures ended disastrously. Souvorine realised the fact very quickly, and managed to influence his collaborators so as to induce them to accept it too. When he died some two years ago, the *Novoie Vremia* had become a power before whom the whole country bowed. By power I do not mean influence; I do not think the Russian Thunderer wields much of the latter at the present moment, in spite of its enormous circulation and vast resources.

Personally, Alexis Souvorine was most interesting. In spite of his immense talents he had known dark days, and his early experiences in journalism had been most difficult and painful. He had never forgotten the fact, which imbued him with an immense pity for the

sufferings of others. His purse was always open, and he liked to give encouragement to those starting out on the path of life. That kind old man, bent with the weight of his years, made one of the most indulgent of masters, and all who came into contact with him departed with a feeling of deep gratitude and respect for this father of modern journalism in Russia.

Souvorine's house was a meeting place for the best intellects in St. Petersburg, and he always evinced a superlative interest in all the social developments of his Fatherland, as well as in its political influence in Europe. The war with Japan plunged him into a deep and lasting sorrow, but even in the darkest hours of Russia's national existence he never despaired, and died convinced still that his country would rise more powerful than ever from the disasters that had befallen her.

One of the most bitter adversaries of Souvorine was Prince Mestchersky. His paper, the *Grajdanine*, represented the ultra-Conservative party in Russia. Its owner was the personal friend of the Emperor Alexander III., and taking into consideration that fact, he was allowed to say and to write many things that no one else would have ever dared to proclaim. The person of Prince Mestchersky has been passionately discussed. It is not my place to judge him, but I must render him justice and say that even in his most bitter polemics he remained a gentleman. He never deserted the order to which he belonged, nor the flag that his family traditions called upon him to defend. His extreme opinions did not procure him many sympathies; on the contrary, he made a con-

siderable number of enemies, but he never changed, always remaining an absolutely sincere Conservative. However one differed from him in opinions, or even believed him to be mischievous, it was impossible to refuse him respect for his untarnished reputation as an honourable journalist.

It is impossible not to refer to Count Leo Tolstoy, partly on account of the strange moral transformation which turned a wonderful novelist into the apostle of a new religion that no one but himself could understand. Many hoped that the dying words of Tourguenieff, when from his bed of suffering he wrote to Tolstoy, "Great writer of our Russian fatherland, go back to your literary work," would be listened to. But in vain. Indeed, the literary world was beginning vaguely to grasp the fact that an enormous intellect had lost itself in the mazes of a labyrinth out of which it was becoming every day more difficult for it to emerge. Already the lessons preached and the examples given by this missionary without any religion save that of his own imagination, had begun to give rise to controversy. It is impossible, without saying much, to do more than express the feeling that this man with a colossal mind, who had not succeeded in discovering peace for his own thoughts, had exercised an exceedingly strong influence over many others who, without him, would perhaps have found peace and happiness in the accomplishment of simple duties and in submission to the will of God.

During the whole reign of Alexander III. the press remained confined in very narrow limits, and played scarcely any part in public life. There was little to

discuss during that period of the national existence, which was rather one of constant work, in which the Emperor was the first one to set the example. His ambitions were centred in the development of the vast country confided to his care, and in carving a path of material progress that was bound to lead his beloved Russia on to prosperity. He detested journalists, and he partly succeeded in suppressing them almost entirely, owing to the unbounded confidence which his person inspired. By no means did he wish to kill every manifestation of human thought, as he has been so accused; but he directed it toward a useful channel instead of allowing it to dissipate in vague longings; and in doing so he rendered one of his greatest services to Russia.

With the death of the Emperor, the Japanese war, and all the developments that followed upon the events of 1905 and 1906, Russian journalism underwent a complete transformation. It is now fast becoming more truly representative of the fourth estate which is so respected in the rest of Europe. Newspapers begin to count for something and to acquire a certain importance.

But much as I should like to, and curious as this transformation has been, I cannot speak about it with the authority of personal experience, for the reason that I was not living in Russia when these events took place. In Russia the press of to-day exists on a footing that would require a volume to make intelligible to the foreigner.

CHAPTER XII

DEATH OF ALEXANDER III

ON January 1st, 1894, the usual New Year's reception took place at the Winter Palace. The Emperor seemed to be as well as ever, and showed himself particularly gracious in regard to the foreign ministers and ambassadors, who came to present their good wishes for the coming year. The Empress was radiant with beauty and grace, as she smiled on all the ladies assembled to bring her their greetings. The season began in a brilliant fashion, and the débutantes in particular expected much from it, because the eldest daughter of their Majesties, the Grand Duchess Xenia, was to go out into society for the first time that winter, and several balls in her honour were already announced. The first large reception at the Winter Palace was fixed for January 10th, when society was startled by hearing that the Emperor had fallen dangerously ill.

I heard the news a little earlier than did the general public, through General Tchérévine, who spent the evening with me on that particular day. Neither he nor myself, however, suspected the gravity of the crisis that had arisen, nor guessed its sad issue.

The General thought that the indisposition of the Tsar was only a sharp attack of influenza, but

nevertheless he seemed to be slightly uneasy, and expressed the hope that it would not leave any traces after it. But he admitted that the great drawback to a quick convalescence lay in the fact that Alexander III. would not follow the doctor's prescriptions, or give up, even for a time, the incessant activities with which his days and, for the matter of that, his nights, were occupied. A period of entire rest had long been enjoined upon him, but he could not make up his mind to it or to allow himself any relaxation from the continual work to which he had attached himself with a devotion and a self-abnegation such as very few monarchs have ever evinced.

So persistent a strain could not be endured for ever, and it was evident that under such conditions any illness attacking the Emperor was bound to be harder for him to overcome than for one whose strength had not been overtaxed.

When the first bulletins concerning the health of the Tsar were published, the public showed far more anxiety than could have been supposed. There seemed at that time to be no real reason for it; but Alexander III. was popular with all classes, and the news that he lay on a bed of sickness moved it deeply, and proved to him, as well as to the whole world, how beloved he was by his subjects, and how necessary his existence was considered to be for their prosperity, as well as for the peace of Europe.

Professor Zakharine, who had a great reputation in Moscow as a clever doctor, was telegraphed for, and after a few days one heard the danger was over. The Emperor made such quick progress that the first

Court ball, which had been postponed, was after all fixed for the end of that same month of January, because the Sovereign felt he would be well enough to attend it, as well as all the other festivities of the season. He seemed to carry himself as well as of old, but his looks showed an alarming change. Toward the end of March, just before starting on a journey to Italy, I happened to be present at the jubilee of the Hospital of the Holy Trinity, the Superior of which, Mlle. Abaza, was one of my great friends. On that occasion I saw the Emperor nearer than I had done for some time. The change that had taken place in his appearance struck me most painfully. Prince John Galitzine, who was in attendance on the Empress on that day, asked me when the ceremony was over to give him some lunch, and as I drove him to my house in my carriage, I asked him what he thought about the health of our beloved Sovereign. He replied that he was also very anxious about him, but that the doctors seemed satisfied and did not appear to think that anything serious was the matter, indeed, they had only advised him to rest more and work less than he had been in the habit of doing.

I left St. Petersburg a few days after this conversation to spend several months abroad. It was whilst on a visit to some friends in Scotland that I heard at last that the days of Alexander III. were numbered.

What follows belongs to history. It does not enter within the limits of this small book of remembrances to speak about those days otherwise than to mention the deep regrets that were felt in the whole of Europe when it became aware that the Sovereign who had

contrived to win for himself such profound respect and entire confidence from all the nations of the world was about to die.

The consternation which prevailed everywhere was intense, and even in Germany, where the Emperor did not possess too many friends, he was mourned sincerely, because everyone knew there, as everywhere else, that so long as he remained at the head of his vast Empire, the peace of Europe ran no risk of being troubled by any untoward adventure.

I was in Berlin, on my way to St. Petersburg, when the end came and Alexander III. breathed his last. Two days before he died I received from General Tchérévine, who was at Livadia, a wire in which he said, "A miracle alone can save." I shall never forget that sad November day, when we heard that all was over. The whole morning had passed away in anxious expectation, and as the time neared six I went again to make inquiries at the Russian Embassy, where they told me they had received no news. A few moments later, when I returned to the hotel where I was staying, the hall porter met me with a special edition of a news sheet in his hand, announcing to the world that the reign of Alexander III. had ended.

Great and deep was the general grief when the sad news began to spread, and I shall never forget the first prayers for the dead in the chapel of the Russian Embassy in Berlin. All the assistants were crying, and the voice of the priest trembled as he invoked Divine mercy for the soul of the deceased monarch. A few days later, when I arrived in St. Petersburg, the body of the Emperor was already in the fortress,

lying in state, and it was there that I went to bid a last good-bye to him. The saddest thoughts came crowding into my mind as I looked upon the changed face, now grown so yellow and so small, of that mighty monarch one had loved and respected so well.

It was more than painful to look upon the Empress, bowed down by her terrible grief. The sight of her desolate face and figure, half hidden under the heavy folds of her long crêpe veil, was pathetic in the extreme. I think that no one who saw her during those terrible days could ever forget the expression of immense and hopeless despair that dwelt in her lovely eyes, full of heartrending sorrow and pouring with tears as she bent over the coffin of her Consort. One understood so well that for her, as well as for the husband whom she mourned, everything earthly had come to an end sooner than could have been thought or expected.

When Alexander III. had breathed his last the Heir to his Throne had just become engaged to the lovely and accomplished Princess of Hesse, that sweet Princess Alix about whom her mother, the late Grand Duchess Alice, used to write such endearing tales to Queen Victoria. She had hastened to Livadia on hearing that the illness of her future father-in-law had assumed such a threatening turn, and before dying he had the joy of blessing her and wishing her a happy future in the land over which she was to reign.

During these sad and terrible days of agony, when doctors were fighting against the dreaded guest, the Princess's presence was eloquent of consolation, both for her future husband and for his mother, the sorrowing Empress. Together with the whole Imperial Family

she accompanied the body of the deceased monarch to St. Petersburg, where he was laid to rest, near his ancestors, in that grim fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul.

When the last honours had been paid to the dead Sovereign the question arose as to whether the marriage of his successor was to be postponed or not. The nuptials of the heirs of the Romanoff dynasty had always been the occasion of sumptuous festivities. This time it was an Emperor who was about to bring a bride to the home of his race, and the event was an unprecedented one. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been attended with grand pomp, and followed by a whole series of balls and receptions, outvying themselves in splendour. Now the Imperial Family and the whole of Russia were weeping for Alexander III., and the very word festivity seemed to sound like an insult to his revered memory. On the other hand, the State required an Empress and the dynasty an heir. It was decided, after some hesitation, to pass over certain obstacles and to celebrate the marriage of the Emperor immediately after the funeral of his father, but to do so as quietly as the circumstances allowed. The bride did not make a public entry into St. Petersburg, and on her arrival was driven to the palace of her sister, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, where she remained until the time of her nuptials.

How well I remember that day! It was a bleak November morning, but not entirely devoid of sunshine, as is generally the case at that time of the year

in St. Petersburg. Nature seemed to smile upon the young couple and their union was accompanied by the good wishes of many millions of people, whose thoughts were that day centred on that old Palace of its Emperors where the ceremony was to take place. We started early, and so had plenty of time to look around us and to seek our own friends in those immense rooms filled with people gathered together from all parts of the Empire to invoke the blessings of Heaven on the heads of their youthful Sovereign and his lovely bride.

She looked beautiful indeed in her bridal array, with the huge diamond crown, which all the Russian Princesses wear on their wedding day, resting proudly on her head, and the long Imperial mantle of gold cloth and ermine carried by high functionaries behind her. Her countenance was perfect in its mixture of maidenly modesty and loving anxiety, and she bore herself indeed with queenly dignity and womanly grace. She walked hand-in-hand with the Emperor along the long halls of the Winter Palace on her way to the church, her progress being punctuated by exclamations of sincere admiration on every hand. People stood staring with an eagerness that must have touched her had not emotion prevented her from noticing them as they strained their necks to catch a glimpse of their Empress.

Behind her walked the Empress Dowager, leaning on the arm of her aged father, the King of Denmark. She was dressed in pure white cashmere, trimmed with white crêpe, without a single jewel to relieve it. It was seen, too, that she was vainly trying to restrain her tears. That day must have been terribly

painful for her, with all the remembrances that it could not fail to evoke; but she bore herself bravely, and did not once break down during the long ceremony that gave her another daughter to love and care for. Deep sympathy for her was expressed everywhere; and those who had seen her at other times in all the splendour inseparable from her high position, and who knew her as a happy wife and happy mother, could not help expressions of intense pity escaping their lips when they beheld her lonely and sad figure.

The religious ceremony lasted for over an hour, during which the bride contrived to remain calm in spite of the emotion that must at times have overpowered her in the solemn moments when she was accepting the difficult position that was henceforward to be hers, and which she was to grace so well in the years that followed. She performed to perfection all the ceremonies prescribed by the rites of the Orthodox Church, only her pale cheeks lighted up with a sudden fire that made her appear even more beautiful than she was, as, after the wedding, the Emperor led her back through the vast and lofty rooms to the private apartments of the Winter Palace, Empress of his heart as well as of his Empire.

The marriage of the Emperor was certainly a popular one, and his Consort was received not only with enthusiasm, but also with affection by the whole Russian people. They felt grateful to her for bringing joy and happiness into the life of their monarch. When, after the marriage ceremony, the young couple drove in state to the Kazan Cathedral, the Empress still dressed in her bridal robes, immense acclamations

from the crowd greeted them, and followed them on to the small Anitchkov Palace, where they were to reside with the Empress Dowager until their own apartments would be ready to receive them, and in those shouts of welcome not one false note could be heard. The nation, after having mourned for its dead Emperor, wished a long and happy life to the new ruler and to his lovely bride, as she stood before it, fair as the morn, beautiful as a southern night.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CORONATION OF NICHOLAS II

A QUIET and uneventful year went by, and we found ourselves on the eve of another coronation. We arrived at Moscow about ten days before the ceremony, and were immediately plunged into a sea of gaiety. The ancient capital was a curious place at that time. The number of strangers, guests from every part of the world, was enormous, and one had the opportunity of meeting most of the European celebrities of the time.

England was represented by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and the dignity, grace, and politeness of the latter captured all hearts. Austria was to send the Archduke Victor Louis, but just as he was about to start the elder brother of Francis Joseph, heir to his throne and crown, died suddenly, and everything was changed, down to the ball which the Austrian Ambassador, Prince Liechtenstein, was to give in honour of our Sovereigns. Though another Archduke, Eugen, arrived in time for the Coronation ceremony, he only remained for that one day. Prince Henry of Prussia, whose wife was the sister of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, came on behalf of William II.; Italy was represented by the Duke of Genoa, and the French Republic sent a special mission

with General Boisdeffre at its head. It would be difficult to mention the names of all those whom the quaint spectacle that Moscow was about to provide had drawn within its walls. I must, however, mention Lord and Lady Iveagh, both charming, pleasant, and amiable, who seemed to enjoy the pageant with their whole hearts.

The first act in the spectacle was provided by the State entry of the Emperor and Empress, which constituted quite a unique affair by the luxury and magnificence that accompanied it. I do not think that any other Court in Europe can boast of such State carriages as the Russian, and the sight was truly marvellous as one after the other they passed before our eyes. First came the two Empresses: Marie Feodorovna, in a gilded coach surmounted by the Imperial Crown, and Alexandra Feodorovna, in another, without a crown on its top. The Tsar himself rode on horseback a little in front. He was followed by a brilliant retinue, as well as all the members of his own family and the foreign Princes who had arrived in Moscow to see him assume the Crown of the Romanoffs. The procession was imposing in the extreme, and what perhaps was the most striking incident, as it slowly passed through the streets of old Moscow, was when it stopped before the little chapel of the Iverski Madonna, the patron of the city. Here the Emperor got down from his horse, and the two Empresses alighted from their carriages; they all knelt down before the shrine, invoking its protection on their heads.

The Kremlin was bright with bunting and flags and garlands of flowers, hanging in festoons on its ancient

walls and ramparts. Slowly through the Gates of the Saviour the long line of soldiers, courtiers, high officers of State, chamberlains in their gold embroidered uniforms, passed, and stopped on the huge inner square, where the Tsar of All the Russias alighted, and before entering the precincts of the Palace, directed his steps toward the sacred cathedrals that make this spot such a memorable one in the history of old Russia. At that moment guns were fired, and all the bells of the many churches began to ring joyously. Indeed it was a spectacle which would remain engraved on the memory of those who had witnessed it for ever and ever.

And what can I say about the Coronation itself? Here, again, the one scene was unique to Russia. The sight of the inner courtyard of the Kremlin, with stands for the spectators erected around it, its pavement covered with scarlet cloth, and the three cathedrals rising solemn and beautiful in their simple lines, and in the centre the palace with its gigantic staircase by which the Emperor and his Consort were to descend on their way to the Church of the Assumption, was truly wonderful. On each step of that staircase was standing a cuirassier in his white uniform and gold helmet surmounted by the Russian eagle, and a Cossack of the escort in a scarlet tunic, that added a note of gravity to the scene. Priests in their embroidered vestments appeared now and then crossing the vast square, and at last a procession of the clergy sprinkled holy water on the path which Nicholas II. and his Consort were to traverse.

A few moments of silence followed—silence tense

with nervous expectation; and from the top of the great staircase appeared a long row of chamberlains and Court personages, preceding the Dowager Empress. She was clothed in cloth of silver, with the Imperial Crown of diamonds rising high upon her lovely little head. From her shoulders hung the insignia of her dignity, a long mantle, supported by chamberlains and pages. This magnificent robe was all gold; it had the Russian eagle embroidered on the back, and it was lined with ermine. Marie Feodorovna paused for a few moments when she reached the first step of the stairs, and bowed to the crowd and spectators massed in the square and the stands with that inimitable grace so inseparable from her personality. Then she descended slowly, and found at the bottom of the steps a canopy of scarlet silk with high ostrich plumes on its top awaiting her. It was carried by generals and officers of high rank, and it was under its shade that the Empress crossed the square to the Cathedral of the Assumption, on the threshold of which awaited her the Metropolitan of Moscow. He escorted her inside the church, where she took her place on a dais that had been prepared for her opposite the one which her son with his young wife was to occupy. She carried herself with a dignity that deeply impressed every spectator, and in silence she remained sitting, immovable and beautiful, until the clamours outside announced to her that the Emperor was, in his turn, crossing the square on his way to the Cathedral.

It was a most impressive sight when the Tsar's procession slowly unrolled itself before the dazzled eyes of the spectators. He walked hand in hand with his

lovely Consort, whose pale, cameo-like features appeared even more beautiful than usual in the clear light of the morning sun. She was dressed in a robe of silver cloth, simpler than that worn by Marie Feodorovna, and had no ornament whatever in her fair hair, which hung in long curls down her shoulders. The Emperor was also bare-headed, in the uniform of his Preobrajensky regiment, with the broad blue sash of the order of St. Andrew across his breast. He was leading the Empress with infinite care; both of them stepped under a canopy similar to the one beneath which Marie Feodorovna had walked, and slowly wended their steps toward the Cathedral, where priests and bishops, with the three Metropolitans of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev, were standing at the entrance awaiting them. And soon the gates closed behind them as, in their turn, they entered the old shrine in which so many Tsars had received the crown of Empire.

The ceremony went on with the usual pomp and splendour inseparable from such pageants. About two hours later the big bell of Ivan Veliki started a joyous peal, to which replied the bells of the three hundred churches and monasteries of Moscow, and the deep voice of the guns as they fired their salute. Thus was the whole of Russia told that its Emperor had assumed the crown of his ancestors.

In the course of a few moments the gates of the Cathedral were thrown open once more, and the Empress Dowager came out, returning to the Palace with the same regal state as attended her earlier in the day. About five minutes later came the Emperor,

walking alone under the canopy with white ostrich plumes. He had the crown on his head, the Imperial mantle on his shoulders, the sceptre in his right hand, and the orb in the left. Behind him, also alone, walked the young Empress, attired in her Imperial robes for the first time. The crowned Tsar of All the Russias presented himself before his subjects with all the attributes of his high position, as their legitimate Sovereign and Master. He made the tour of all the churches and shrines of the Kremlin, and then mounted again the steps of the Red Staircase, where, together with his Consort, he saluted the spectators from the top. He did so three times in succession, to the accompaniment of hurrahs so loud that they almost drowned the deep voice of the guns and the joyful clashing of bells. Moscow rejoiced, and Russia rejoiced with it to know that its Tsar had been crowned.

Festivity upon festivity followed each other in quick succession after the ceremony, and for days one lived in a whirl of gaiety, with scarcely time to think, until the horrors of the catastrophe of the Khodinka Field overwhelmed the rejoicing with a flood of tragedy.

A great deal has been written concerning this awful accident, the gruesome details of which did not reach the Sovereign until much later. It was heartrending in its magnitude, but it was later on exploited by the enemies of the throne in a most unwarrantable manner, and made use of by unscrupulous people.

It is not my place to write anything concerning it. But I cannot help giving here the judgment of a statesman of vast experience, Count Constantine Pahlen, formerly Minister of Justice under Alexander II. He

is now dead, but in his lifetime he was a man of unsullied honour, high moral standing, and reputation above reproach. He had been appointed by the Emperor himself head of a commission of inquiry into this disaster, which so completely spoilt the Coronation festivities. Count Pahlen, who only accepted office after much hesitation, had a great friend in the person of M. von Schwanebach, later a Cabinet Minister. M. von Schwanebach was also a great friend of mine, and this is what he wrote to me during the course of the summer of 1896 :

" I have seen Count Pahlen several times. He is spending the summer at Peterhof, and told me that he was immensely pleased at the extremely conscientious manner in which all this sad Khodinka affair had been personally examined by the Sovereign, and of the serious tone, as well as the extreme modesty of the young monarch, who is not only anxious to be well advised, but also earnestly wishing to do what is right, and to profit through the experience of others older than himself."

This is the opinion of an honest man, told in confidence to another of like honour, and it may prove of use to refute certain calumnies that have been put into circulation by badly-intentioned people.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BELL OF NYROB : A RUSSIAN LEGEND

AS I am writing about the Coronation of Nicholas II. I am reminded of a pretty legend which tells of a superstition connected with the Romanoffs. I heard it one autumn while staying at the country house of one of my friends in the centre of Russia.

After dinner, rather tired and sleepy, we sat with my host and one or two guests in a cosy room, with our feet on the fender, near a roaring fire. It was raining, and the wind from the steppes howled dismally among the trees of the shady park. It was a night for ghosts, as someone remarked, and we forthwith asked the master of the house whether or not his castle was haunted, as so many Russian country places are. Our host smiled and replied that we were quite safe, as he had never heard that an inhabitant of the other world had ever honoured his comfortable home.

"But," he added, "I have been in places where supernatural things happen, and so I cannot treat the subject with utter disbelief, as I suppose all of you do."

"No, not all," replied one of the guests; "we would not be Russians if we did not at times admit the existence of superstitions and legends, transmitted

from father to son. But once, you say, you have witnessed supernatural things. Won't you relate to us your personal experiences in the matter? I am sure we should be delighted to hear about them," and he turned toward us as he spoke.

We all acquiesced, and after some hesitation our host lighted a cigar, and, getting nearer the fire, he at last began his story, which I here reproduce exactly as he told it to us:

"A few years ago, I happened to be travelling in the government of Perm, having been sent there on a mission by the directors of my company to report on the conditions of a mine in which they were interested.

"There exists no railway in that part of the world, and I was travelling in a *tarantass* (Russian travelling cart) with post-horses. The roads were abominable, like all roads are in Russia in spring and in autumn, and it was then the beginning of May. When I reached a little village called Nyrob, the inhuman sort of cart in which I was being tortured broke down, and I had perforce to stop there until it was repaired, which I was told could not be until the next day. I was wondering where I could stay during these twenty-four hours, as the place could boast of no inn or post-house where a traveller could rest. Whilst I was meditating on what I could do, the village priest happened to pass, and upon hearing of the plight I was in, he offered me the hospitality of his house, which I was delighted to accept, and whither I hastened to accompany him.

"Father Paul was a venerable old man, with flowing beard and hair, and decidedly more learned than

the average parish priest in such out-of-the-way places. I found him a pleasant and agreeable companion, and the afternoon passed more quickly than I would have expected. He offered me some tea and a simple dinner, which his wife brought, serving us with alacrity, but not sitting down with us, though I asked her repeatedly to do so. The meal was scarcely over when one came to fetch Father Paul to a sick parishioner, and I was left to my own devices. The evening was mild and clear, and I thought I would go for a walk and explore the place where my bad luck had wrecked me.

"Nyrob is a large village, with one street in the middle, not different from others in Russia, and offering nothing picturesque or beautiful to the onlooker. There was a church, wooden, like the rest of the buildings, and a few trees were planted around it; but the place was monotonous in the extreme, and had nothing attractive about it. After having explored the village, I turned my steps toward a small wood on a hill which dominated the place. The trees were just beginning to bud; lilies of the valley were to be seen everywhere, and the contrast of Nature full of life and joy with the gloom of the houses standing lower down, whose grey roofs seemed so dreary beside the loveliness of the bushes and flowers, appealed to my senses so strongly that the memory of it still lives in my soul whenever I remember that spring day.

"As night was falling, I thought it was time to return, and started homewards. Somehow, I missed my way, and found myself near a small chapel, which I had not noticed while climbing up to the wood,

where I had stayed so long. It was dark, so I did not stop to examine this chapel, and passed on. Suddenly I heard the sound of a bell, which startled me so much that I stopped still, and scanned the country around me to try and find out whence it came.

"I saw nothing, but the sound continued and became clearer and clearer, until it rang as if it had been quite close to me. It was a weird and uncanny sound, soft and harmonious, however, but resembling nothing that I had ever heard before. It seemed to proceed from a small hand-bell, and tinkled quite softly but distinctly; and, strange as it may seem, it appeared to proceed from under my feet, and somehow created a most unpleasant impression on my nerves. I hastened my steps, but the sound pursued me and left me no rest. I am not a coward, but I assure you that when I saw an old peasant coming toward me, I felt intensely relieved. I was about to accost him, when he suddenly crossed himself several times and turned back in a hurry. I started in pursuit of him, and after having caught him, asked him the reason why he had fled when he had seen me.

"'I did not fly from you, Barine; I fled from the sound of the Romanoff bell,' was the old man's unexpected reply.

"I asked for an explanation, but could obtain none, as the only answer which I got to my numerous questions was repeated signs of the cross, and the same words, 'It is the Romanoff bell.'

"When I reached the presbytery I found that Father Paul and a supper were awaiting me, and after my first hunger was appeased I asked the priest

what was the meaning of the sound of the Romanoff bell. To my intense surprise Father Paul's face got very stern, and he started also to cross himself reverently several times. At last, noticing my astonishment, he asked me to shut the door quite tightly, and related to me the legend of the Romanoff bell.

"'In 1601,' he said, 'Tsar Boris Godounoff was ruling in Russia. He had no right to occupy the throne, as there were still descendants of Rurik who had every right to become Tsars. Godounoff, who had killed the youngest son of Ivan the Terrible, the youth Dmitry, determined to destroy the Romanoffs, that mighty family so closely allied to the reigning house, and whose rights to the diadem of Monomaque no one in Russia disputed. Fedor Nikitisch Romanoff was compelled to become a monk, whilst his wife also was forced to enter a religious house, where, however, she succeeded in taking with her, and hiding from the vengeance of Godounoff, her only son Michael, who was later on to be chosen as Tsar by the Sobor. Fedor Nikitisch had two brothers: Alexander, who was murdered by the servants of Godounoff, and Michael Nikitisch, the handsomest man in Russia. The last-mentioned was popular among the people, and could easily have overthrown the usurper had he cared to do so. The Tsar was cunning and cruel; he contrived to win over to his side the mistress of Michael Nikitisch, and one night she opened the door to the soldiers of Godounoff, who seized Romanoff, bound him, and, after having loaded him with chains, put him on a cart, and, acting on the orders of the Tsar, took him to this village of Nyrob.

" ' The road was long, the prisoner was treated with the utmost cruelty by his guards and left without food or proper clothing, and this in the depth of winter. At last Nyrob was reached ; and when they got there Michael Nikitisch was allowed to get out of the covered sledge in which he had been confined, and two soldiers held him, whilst some peasants were called by the servants of Godounoff, and ordered to dig a large hole in the frozen ground. The work lasted a long time, under the eyes of the victim, who was beginning to realise the terrible fate that awaited him. When at last it was finished, Michael Nikitisch, always loaded with heavy chains, which still hang in the little chapel you passed to-night, was thrown into that hole, which was covered with planks through which air, but hardly any light, could pass, and left there for ever. Guards were put near the hole where the miserable man was to end his existence, with orders to allow no one to go near, and Godounoff's servants returned to their master to tell him that his orders had been executed, and the victim of his vengeance buried alive in the solitudes of Siberia.

" ' Three years passed, and the robust constitution of Michael Nikitisch did not give way. He could not die. At last his murderers got weary, and decided to leave him to perish from hunger, and warned the villagers that anyone who gave him food would be under penalty of death. The terrible sentence was executed, and for long days and nights one could hear the pleading of the miserable man imploring the passers-by to throw him a piece of bread. Children used to run away from the spot where he was confined

in terror, and no one dared go near it. But still the unfortunate victim remained alive. At last an old woman, who passed for a witch, had the courage to approach the hole where Romanoff was slowly expiring. She murmured some strange words as she did so, and immediately upon hearing them the guards who held watch over that grave fell into a deep sleep. Then the woman crawled to the hole and asked the dying man what she could do for him. "Kill me," was the reply. "I need not do that," retorted the woman; "your hour has struck already, and a few moments will see you released; but you deserve a reward for your sufferings. Take this bell," and she threw him a small silver bell, "and in joy and sorrow, so long as your race will occupy the Throne of Russia, it shall ring, and will tell the world that your martyrdom has won a crown for those of your blood and name."

"'And,' added Father Paul, 'since that day the Romanoff bell, as it is called, has rung every evening, and, let us hope, will go on ringing for years to come. Michael Nikitisch's martyrdom was not suffered in vain.'"

A deep hush fell upon us as our host concluded. We all remained silent after hearing his strange story, and no one ventured to ridicule it. The fire was slowly dying away on the hearth, and in its dying embers the ghosts of a terrible past seemed to appear and linger around us. No one seemed inclined to get up, or to say anything to divert the mind from the tragedy to which we had listened. At last our host broke the painful silence that had followed his narra-

tion: "Let us go to bed," he said; "the silvery bell doesn't ring for us poor mortals."

I often think of the legend of the bell of Nyrob, and as I do so the whole story of that proud Romanoff race comes back to my mind, with its attendant horrors and glories, and the sound of that distant silvery bell ringing everlastingly in the Siberian solitude where the martyrdom of one of its chiefs had won it a throne, resounds clearly in my ears and haunts my thoughts.

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